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UP FRONT

Blow that trumpet

Hawk eyed readers may have noticed a 'stop press' item which appeared at the foot of a house ad in our last issue. For the benefit of those whose eyes were otherwise engaged we shall rather immodestly reprint it: 'The Library Journal has named Games International as "one of the best new magazines of '88"'. What, you quite rightly ask, is *The Library Journal*? Published in New York, this august organ is dispatched to libraries the world over (there are 10 000 in America alone) and is the guide from which librarians make their subscription decisions. The 'best of' accolade is afforded to only 24 magazines world wide each year, so naturally we are both honoured and proud to be one of the class of '88. Unfortunately the award does not carry with it the cash prize of \$100 000 that we had hoped for. This means that the proposed staff bonus – a seven day luxury cruise around the Thames estuary – will not occur. Instead, they will have to content themselves with the knowledge that it is their contributions and hard work that made such an honour possible. Thank you, all.

Members not allowed

Page 44 of our last issue caused something of a scandal at the recent GAMA convention in Las Vegas. This was the ad, you may recall, for Metal Magic Miniatures featuring three Orcs in, er,

controversial poses, and which was quickly dubbed 'the orcs with the dorts' by the convention attendees. *Dragon* magazine also ran the ad but took the blue pencil to the offending parts. The reason for this shock horror reaction was not the prudishness one might think, but the fear of parental reaction in what is still a very puritan country. The problem is the moral minority, who see everything from *quiche lorraine* to role-playing as being the work of the devil. Remember those crazy mixed up kids who used to burn John Lennon records after his infamous proclamation that the Beatles were 'more popular than Jesus'? Well, they've grown up and somehow managed to have children. Imagine the reaction then, should kiddiewinkle bring a magazine containing orcs with dorts, published by some goddam limey heathens, into their god-fearing homes. Hell and damnation would seem like a day out at the seaside by comparison.

The matter of our ad though, is a trivial one compared to the some of the reactions rolegames have inspired. So much so that Greg Stafford, of Chaosium, has produced a pamphlet which goes some way towards countering the sensational outpourings of a rabid press. The pamphlet also doubles as a help manual for beleaguered retailers on how to quell the fears of parents who think that Junior is turning into a demon worshipper because he enjoys a bit of role-playing. A welcome move, but unlikely to appease the true fanatic whose psychotic world possesses a logic all of its own.

Fortunately the UK hobby has largely been able to escape the attention of the Yellow Press. Let's just hope we're well prepared when it does.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION RATES

From June 1, the price of all subscriptions will be increased by £2.50 due to increased handling costs caused by our merger with Games Monthly.

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REVIEW SECTION

Owing to 'Sumo' Siggins being incapacitated (an overweight shoulder was the diagnosis), the Big White Chief was hauled off his sunbed and pressganged into action by the revolting serfs.

Joining him is UK citizen and card sharp Philip A Murphy who yells 'Deal Me In', only to be cast off to our imaginary island. James Wallis also comes up with the goods, in particular *Sniper! Bug Hunter*, which arrived without any fanfare but claims the accolade of Game of the Month, and at a price you can't beat.

In the feature section Strategy Seminar makes its debut with a few tips on how to play *Die Macher*. Look out for upcoming articles on *1830* and *Victory in the Pacific* in the same series.

For role-players Paul Mason undertakes the first of a series of comparative studies looking at a particular genre, beginning with the first – the fashionable world of cyberpunks, while James Wallis grovels (nothing new in that) around the dungeon to assess the long awaited second edition of *AD&D*.

Star Ratings

Top class game. Highly recommended

Very good game. Worth buying

Worth a look

**

Only if the subject interests you

*

A true turkey

GENERAL GAMES

**FIRST PAST
THE POST**
IN HOUSE DESIGN
PUBLISHED BY
WADDINGTONS
PRICE £9.99

Already this appears to be a year in which the resurrected will outnumber the newborn. The latest filly to come charging back from the grave was known previously as *Lose Your Shirt*, the life support machine for which was terminated back in the early seventies. Now revived and wearing a brand new suit of clothes, *First Past The Post* is something of a welcome revival. As horse racing games go, this is probably the least realistic – the idea of horses moving

diagonally backwards is especially hard to handle. Nevertheless the game is fun to play in small doses. At the outset each player receives a set of movement cards corresponding to the colours of the horses. You place your bets according to the strength of your hand. The betting system is very simple: 2–1 for a place, 5–1 for a win. Losing wagers are placed in the jackpot pool. After the first race you may attempt to scoop the pool by placing a single £50 bet for a win. To indicate the horse you have bet on, you take a card representing that colour of horse and place it face down in front of you. This secrecy is important because you will certainly need the assistance of other players if your nag is to finish as you will never have enough movement points to hit the tape under your own steam. Movement is (literally) straightforward except that you are only allowed one lane change per move. This means you can nobble your opponents' horses by careful card play. Several cards allow you to move *any* horse forwards and backwards (not at the same time, thankfully) and it is here that most of the bluffing occurs, because if your opponents guess which horse you have backed you could find yourself

racing towards the starting gate in rapid reverse.

Each race takes about ten minutes. The rulebook suggests eight races, but I would say six, if tedium is to be avoided. The rules themselves are not entirely clear on a couple of points: there is no stipulation that a horse must be moved the full distance where possible. As this was present in the original game I would assume it applies here. Secondly, the rules state it is possible for a player to go broke, but there is no provision for such an occurrence. I would suggest loans of £100 with 20% interest payable after every race.

In terms of sophistication this is not in the same stable as *Win, Place, and Show*, but then it doesn't pretend to be.

A simple, fun game for 2–6 players, to which a certain piquancy could be added by playing for real money. Not that I would recommend such a course, unless you want to lose your shirt, that is.

Brian Walker

VIRGIN GAMES TOP TEN MARCH 1989

1. **Pictionary** (Kenner Parker)
2. **Trivial Pursuit** (Kenner Parker)
3. **Risk** (Kenner Parker)
4. **Pass Out** (Paul Lamond)
5. **Scrabble** (Spears)
6. **Monopoly** (Waddingtons)
7. **Travel Scrabble** (Spears)
8. **Sexual TriviaGold** (Paul Lamond)
9. **Therapy** (Milton Bradley)
10. **Outburst** (Kenner Parker)



CIRCUS IMPERIUM

DESIGNED BY
JORDAN K WEISMAN,
SAM LEWIS & L ROSS
BABCOCK III

PUBLISHED BY
FASA

PRICE £14.95

Everybody who has played *Circus Maximus* will immediately wonder how *Circus Imperium* compares. Well, picture yourself playing *Circus Maximus* with the following changes:

- 1 Beasts are pulling your chariot (gravity chariot, that is) instead of horses.
- 2 The beasts don't always respond to your commands
- 3 Whipping the beasts sometimes pisses them off to the extent that they go into a frenzy
- 4 Instead of crashing when you hit a wall, you bounce off
- 5 Each charioteer has a gladiator on foot to help him win the race by attacking opponents as they drive by, and
- 6 You can try to jump from one chariot to another.

Silly? Sure. Fun? You bet. As good a game as *Circus Maximus*? Well, maybe not. But a good game in its own right. The rule book by itself is worth the price of the game. I usually hate comic rule books, but this one is the first I've seen which manages to be both humorous and present a relatively complete set of rules at the same time. I won't give you any examples because that would be like seeing the best lines of a movie in the preview, which drives me crazy. But this is a game any gamer should want to play at least once so you might as well read the rule book beforehand.

The rule book is also nicely laid out with lots of pictures and diagrams. One page

shows four pictures of *carnivous amazingsous* (the beast): a plain shot, one without quills, one of the skeleton, and a close-up of the internal salacious cavity. Unusual stuff. The back page contains the assembly instructions for the cardboard buildings that must be cut out and glued or taped together to make the Sky Boxes which go in the middle of the track. Very unusual stuff. Fortunately, it isn't necessary to assemble the buildings to play the game.

Two tracks are included: one large (two-map) and one small. The large map even allows you to run a figure eight, demolition derby type race instead of the normal oval course. Other components are cardboard counters, cornering cards and whipping cards, and a 10-sided die. A record sheet is printed on the back of the rule book and must be photocopied since each player needs one to play.

The cardboard counters are much thinner than most games' and detract from the enjoyment of the game, since they are a pain to pick up each time you have to move. The cards and maps are almost as flimsy. Too bad, because I expect the compo-

nents will wear out before the owning player's enjoyment of the game does. Thicken up, FASA!

The spaces on the tracks are rectangles in a brick pattern, which creates the same type of movement possibilities as a hex grid. Both tracks are four lanes wide. The rule book states that the smaller track should be used only when there are six players or less. Only eight chariots are provided for the larger track, but the game can handle more easily, and this is a game where more is definitely merrier. The corner spaces are numbered, lowest numbers on the inside lane, highest on the outside.

Each chariot starts the game with eight movement points. This number is reduced as the beasts take hits. The chariot and player also take hits which are recorded on the record sheet, but their abilities are not reduced except by a crash or death.

The only way for a player to increase his movement beyond his maximum movement points each turn is to draw whipping cards. A player can draw up to six whipping cards each turn. Most cards inflict

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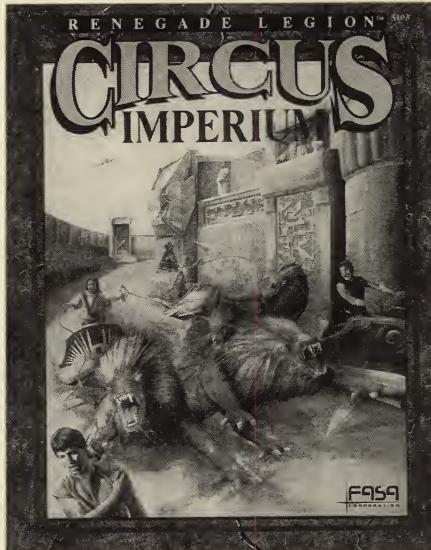
Access

damage to the beasts and/or the chariot, give the player one or two extra movement points, or a combination of both. The remaining six cards send the beasts into a frenzy.

Each turn, a player must announce how many movement points he intends to expend during the turn before he starts moving. Chariots can move to any of the three spaces to their front: straight ahead, front right or front left. If all spaces are blocked, a slam occurs. A chariot must always expend the number of movement points the player announced.

If a chariot enters a corner space going faster than the corner number, it has exceeded the safe speed and the player must draw a number of cornering cards equal to the difference between his speed and the corner number. All cards are then resolved before movement continues. If the chariot later enters another space over the corner speed, the procedure is repeated. Most corner cards force the chariot to slide in or out one to three lanes, which can result in slams with other chariots or the walls. Each time a chariot hits a wall, the player must roll on the On The Wall Table. The result is the amount of damage to the chariot and/or beasts, and possibly a thrown driver.

After every player has moved, each player can perform one special action. These include attacking an adjacent chariot or team of beasts or a special action. Special actions include trying to jump back into a chariot after being thrown (either your own or someone else's), trying to jump from one chariot to an-



other, cutting a team loose, or regaining control of a frenzied team. When two players are in the same chariot, hand-to-hand combat is the only allowable action. The rule book doesn't state that this is mandatory though, so I assume two (or more) players can ride around in one chariot for as long as they want. You can figure out who wins if a chariot with more than one driver crosses the finish line first.

A race is three laps. One nice little extra feature is the Incentive Program. 'To stop a driver from hanging out in the back of the pack, an automatic system fires a laser at the Beasts of the last Driver to complete a lap. The laser immediately frenzies the Beasts.'

The frenzy is the heart of the game system. While the beasts are in frenzy, the player has no control over them or the

chariot. The player must roll the die and adds this to his maximum movement points to see how far his chariot must move. Usually this means the chariot will enter one of the curves and the player will be forced to draw umpteen cornering cards. Strangely enough, though, being frenzied can sometimes be an advantage. Especially late in the race, a player who is losing will draw as many whipping cards as possible to try to frenzy his beasts, since this will be the only way to catch up. Of course, what happens mostly during a frenzy is the beasts take lots of damage which reduces their maximum movement, and eventually leaves the player with a very slow chariot when they come out of frenzy, or kills the team off completely.

The game is quicker than *Circus Maximus* because there are fewer rules and special situations, there is generally less to think about, and players are not allowed to interrupt their movement to attack. This is a big plus, as the last few *Circus Maximus* games I played in took forever.

Circus Imperium has definitely tried to attract the same audience. If you've ever walked by the *Circus Maximus* games at conventions you'll know how loud the players and audience get. The cornering cards all contain slogans for the 'Boys On The Bend' (all the players who aren't moving) to chant! I can almost hear them now.

Alan R Moon

DEAL ME IN

DESIGNED BY
BOBBY EVANS

PUBLISHED BY
NORAUT

PRICE £14.95

With the dominance of the Americans and Germans in the marketplace, it's always a pleasure to review a 100% British game. *Deal Me In* provides me with a double

helping since, like me, it's 100% Northern Irish.

Despite this being Noraut's first published game, they obviously appreciate the necessity of top quality presentation. Both the box and the contents are full colour, bright, attractive and produced from quality materials. The immediate impression is value for money, even before playing the game!

Deal Me In could be described simply as a combination of Scrabble and Poker. The board is a straightforward 11 by 11 matrix and, like Scrabble, has a symmetrical cross pattern of the twelve picture cards (like double words) and four aces (like the treble words). The game is played much like Scrabble but with a pack of cards, the object being to form scoring

poker hands on the board rather than words. A nice touch is the inclusion of 'end stop' cards which are laced on the board at either end of hands which cannot be expanded. This has the effect of making the board very clear and considerably speeding up play. The four jokers (like blank scrabble tiles) in the game don't start in the bag with the other cards. They must be earned by the players by covering the appropriate, difficult to reach, squares on the board. At this point slips in a rule from Rummy: when a joker is laid by a player it must be named as a specific card and a player possessing that card may switch it for the joker on his turn.

Two other factors make the game play with ease. The examples of play and scoring tables are printed both on the bottom of the box and the inside lid for easy ref-

erence. These are a boon to new players and those slow on the uptake (like our illustrious editor). Additionally, scoring is not performed with the traditional pencil and paper but with poker chips, paid to and from the bank.

What tickled my fancy with **Deal Me In?** Well, the playing time, even with four complete novices, is 30 minutes maximum and each game leaves you wanting more. Also, with each hand one's tactics and understanding improve immeasurably. In your first couple of attempts, eight year olds will give you a run for your money; come your sixth play you'll be confident enough to take on someone

who's just left primary school; after twenty or so you might even consider a small side bet with another adult. I assure you though that you'll have worn out your first set and be well through a second before you'll come anywhere close to the skills of Bobby Evans (the designer) in what, at first sight, deceptively appears to be a game heavily influenced by the luck of the draw.

Why not five stars then? I'm a hard man; I've played only four five star games in my life (*RuneQuest*, *Die Macher*, *Acquire* and *Kremlin*). The rules could do with a hefty sprinkling of examples and to a poker player like myself, the scoring

table doesn't sit well. It doesn't accurately reflect the true percentage chance of forming the hands in question, the most glaring horror being the award of 300 points for a straight flush and 1000 for a royal flush! Nevertheless, these are minor quibbles and the game is a must, especially for Scrabble and Poker fans, and for those who like a family game where, despite heavy competition from the wife and kids, dad can be sure his superior skill will carry the day!

Philip A Murphy

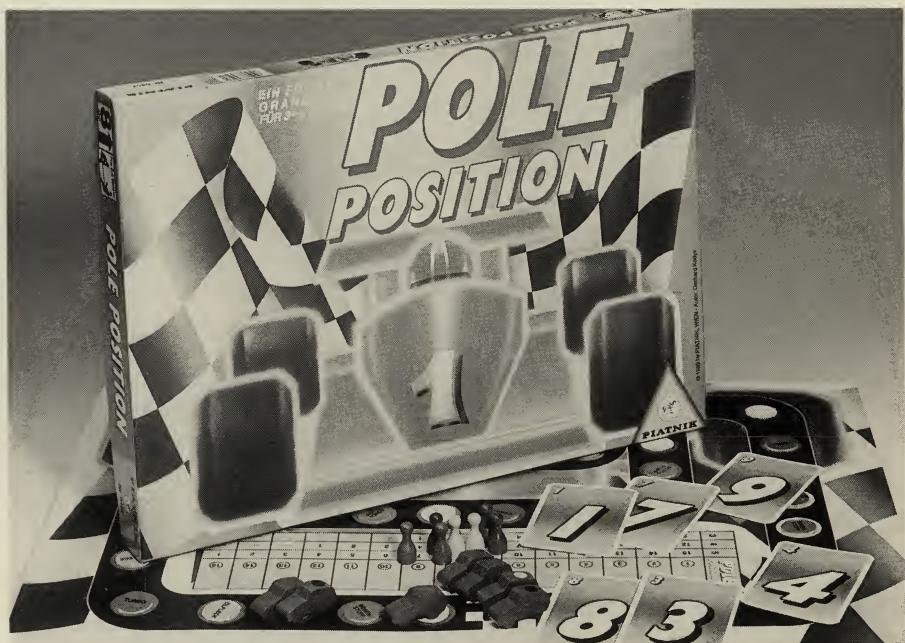
POLE POSITION

DESIGNED BY
GERHARD KODY'S

PUBLISHED BY
PIATNIK

PRICE £16 (approx)

In view of the unavailability of the classic Niki Lauder's F1, this release from Austria is doubly welcome. Gerhard Kodys, who designed the game, is best known for his abstract games such as *Malawi*, and the mathematical propositions on which his games are based are clearly evident here. Not that this is a game for eggheads. Far from it, for it is fun and frustration in equal measures. At the outset, each player receives three cars and nine cards. The track is single lane and consists of indented circles. Into these circles are placed discs of varying colours. Movement consists of playing a card and moving the appropriate number of spaces. However, you must be able to move the maximum which is not always easy. What confounds the best laid plans is the fact that any car you overtake costs two movement points, so if the car has not moved as you anticipated then you could quickly find yourself in a James Hunt (shunt). Movement cards are played simultaneously, the highest moving first. If your move finishes on a green circle then you get a turbo boost and move in front of the next car where there is an available space. A blue circle means that on your



next move overtaking costs only one point. If you start your turn on a yellow circle you can add your position in the race to the card you played and move the total number of spaces. Hit an orange circle and it's pit stop time for that car, while a red disc means an instant move behind the car trailing you. Points are awarded according to the finishing positions, for example in a five player game the winner gets 15 points, last place one point.

As the track differs each time the replay value of the game is high. There is considerable scope for strategy and for frustrating the plans of others. All in all, a fine game. Not quite up to the aforementioned Niki Lauder gem, but it's close.

Brian Walker

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BRITANNIA

*Graham Staplehurst gives
one man's angle on a
popular historical game
that is already regarded as
a classic.*

Britannia is a game for three to five players (but four is the most suitable) designed by Lewis Pulsipher. It is based on the known history of Britain between 45AD and 1085AD, but enables the players, together with a little help from the luck of the dice, to recreate that history in their own manner.

Lew Pulsipher is well known for his scholarly devotion to history and, though an American, evidently knows a good deal more about the origin of the 'English' and other people of Britain than most people who live here (like me!). However, I'll leave the purely historical aspect of Britannia for now and describe the game in a little more detail.

The game consists of a board depicting the island of Britain (including the Hebrides and Orkneys) divided into 37 areas and surrounded by six seas. Lurking off the board are the lands of Gaul, Scandinavia and Erin. Initially, the island is peaceful, with a scattering of British Celtic tribes portrayed in confederations such as the Belgae, the Welsh and the Brigantes. Suddenly, from Gaul, comes the fleet bearing four Roman legions with their auxiliaries on the command of Emperor Claudius. Fifteen units land on the southern shores of Britain . . .

The Destiny Of An Island

This is just the first of many invasions inflicted upon Britannia by successive nations. Some are massive and sudden, like the Romans and Danes; some are slow and insidious like the Irish. All affect the game to a greater or lesser degree



as existing inhabitants attempt to stave off the invaders or channel their lust for territory in another direction. For this is a game of territory, and the trick of winning is holding just enough to achieve your individual objectives. Stretch too far and you're vulnerable – pile your units up and watch them die from lack of supplies.

Each player controls four nations, a nation being a more or less coherent group of people with a unified aim. The Belgae, for example (a quarter of the Blue faction), represent the Celts of lowland England: the Trinovantes, Catuvellauni, Dobunni and Iceni among others. The game notes delineate the aims of the nation in strict terms, awarding victory points for achieving different aims. The Belgae must hold areas after the fourth turn to score points, and also get points for destroying either Roman armies as they advance north or Roman forts left behind. Meanwhile the Roman nation (the first of the Purples, appropriately enough) gets points for invading all English, Welsh and southern Scottish areas and for holding on to its forts, so the Belgae do well to make it through the first turn in games I've played. Thus Blue is set against Purple and command of territory crucial, for no matter how many battles you win, if you haven't held enough areas, you won't win the game.

This aspect of the victory criteria is essential for balance and to ensure that players must mix outright warfare with judicious diplomacy. The Brigantes, Welsh and Picts can all choose to submit to the Ro-

mans rather than be wiped out, safe in the knowledge that the collapse of Rome will call all the legions home after Turn Five, leaving behind only the weakened civil population to defend against the waves of Germanic invaders.

In addition to the simple equation of areas held = support and victory points, there are two other basic rules. The first is that only one nation can occupy an area: if another enters they must fight until one withdraws or is eliminated – even if the units belong to different nations of the same player. The second is the way that combat is dealt with. Each side rolls one die for each army present and kills an opposing army on a 5 or 6 – modified for terrain and special 'enhanced' armies such as cavalry and Roman legions.

Thus far the game is simple – so what makes it exciting? The re-creation of the history of the land we live in is a lively subject and one which continues to enthral me after many games. It's the eternal 'What if?' historians like to ask: what if Harold was defeated at Stamford Bridge or won at Hastings? What if Arthur drove back the Saxons for good? What if the Great Army of the Danes pressed its attacks on Wessex? All these points are elegantly handled in the game through three mechanics (none of which detract from its essential simplicity). There are the specially designed victory objectives mentioned earlier; there are leaders to gather great armies and enhance their fighting power; and there are special rules for particular situations.

The victory point objectives can be great motivators. Take the Welsh, for example. They score 8 points for holding all of Wales (and this includes Devon and Cornwall) in Turn Seven; they can also score a massive 6 points for taking York at any point in the next two turns. Consequently, the Welsh always make a big effort to sack York and end up dividing the Angles. But then what do they do with their army in York – send it home to defend against menacing Irish and Saxon armies, or maintain it as a field army to keep the nations in England from getting overly powerful? And how should the Angles plan – to defend York heavily and deny the Welsh the points, at the risk of losing perhaps 30%–40% of their population, or concentrate elsewhere and let the Welsh take it easily?

Leaders can be very useful. Allowing nations to stack up armies for invasions, giving 50% extra movement and adding one to the die roll in battle, they are scattered thinly for the most part and must be used carefully, particularly by smaller nations. King Arthur, for example, will lead the Romano-British against the Saxons, Angles and Jutes, gaining points for every enemy killed. But if he leaves himself exposed and gets killed, the victor wins 3 points for themselves. At the end of the game, 5 points are at stake between Harold, William and Harald Hardrada the Norwegian for being King of England.

Finally there are the additional rules. These cover everything from raids, when armies can attack and then return safely from whence they came, to the election of Bretwalda or overlord of England before the strong Kings arose. Trying to remember all the rules, together with all your own victory point objectives, and your opponents', and thinking ahead to where the next invader is going to appear all make for a game where you're never really sure what's going to happen next.

An Anvil Of Blood And Terror

So, now you have an idea of how the game is played, let us progress to your first game. How do you win? I hope that the general maxim given above will be a start, but there are four different factions in the game all requiring a slightly different approach. Here are some hints which might just help you do a bit better.

THE PURPLE FACTION

Romans
Romano-British
Scots
Dubliners
Norwegians

The Romans have perhaps more decisions to make than any other nation in the game. They get the most points-per-area for penetrating to the heart of Albion (that's Scotland, except the Scots haven't got there yet) but this will generally mean they have to by-pass Wales and it can also leave them with too few defences down south. Despite the fact that Romans move further each turn than other armies, their mobility is not unlimited and to get additional points when the legions withdraw the Roman player must protect southern England, Cheshire and York.

If you plan on going north, you must reach York in the first turn while eliminating as many Belgae as possible. Try to take out the Brigantes in March and Cheshire as well, and defend the western flank against an early Welsh raid. Don't despair if you lose two or three armies early on through others' lucky die rolls. An alternative strategy is to go for Welsh submission, since getting all of Wales will net you 3 points anyway – more than risking going against the Highlands in Scotland. Welsh mountains are a good defensive base for the Romano-British to take over.

If you go north, this should weaken the Picts and assist your Scots somewhat, especially if you can wear the Brigantes down to a token presence. It sometimes pays to make a deal with the Welsh regarding the latter. The Scots' invasion with King Fergus must push the Picts back after their raiding. Skye is the hinge of Scotland since it borders both western seas, but Dalriada remains the centre of the kingdom. If the Scots look doomed through ill luck, use them to try to eliminate the Brigantes completely.

The second two Purple factions can also help each other. The Dubliners' big advantage is moving after the Norsemen, so they stand every chance of getting both York and Cumbria on their big invasion turn. It is often advantageous for both Scots and Dubliners to bide time at sea when small numbers of invaders are introduced, landing them only in the major invasion. Obviously, empty spaces are

often worth taking to get a foothold and start to build population.

After their invasion, the Dubliners should attack Angles and Danes in the area to weaken the north for Harald's forces, and aim to retreat into Lindsey and Pennines. They can emerge in the last turn to retake York and Cumbria while keeping out of Harald's way when he needs to score points. The Angles are a problem since they will try to eliminate or weaken Harald at any cost, in order to assist Duke William's chances of becoming King.

The Norwegians should be able to score most of their initial invasion points with Dubliner help. Try to push well south on the first stage of the invasion so that Harald can retreat further north and stay out of others' reach. His only real hope for King is that Harold and William kill each other, but a small force in North Mercia sometimes has a chance of catching one or other off guard.

Avoiding putting more than one man in areas the Dubliners want; there's a good chance he'll be able to retreat out. However, the areas are worth holding to get reinforcements. If you do plan to let the Dubliners take York, remember the reinforcements can't land south of it, so ensure your armies aren't concentrated in the north.

THE BLUE FACTION

Belgae
Picts
Angles
Normans

The Blue faction is hard to play well, but don't despair! It can win, and does so more often than you might imagine. It starts by watching the Belgae being annihilated by merciless waves of Roman invaders. All you can do is pray to roll some sixes and slow the Romans down. Always retreat immediately you get the opportunity, preferably to hiland (Downlands or Lindsey). Then attack any undefended fort or, failing that and if you are caught in open terrain, forts with single armies. Always attack the forts of greatest worth to the Roman, even if this leaves you in a worse defensive position (as the Belgae, you couldn't have a worse defensive position). Just go for kill points.

The Picts however should do everything possible to survive as widely spread as possible. Don't retreat from Dunedin

until you have to and build in the north, ready to squeeze the Caledonians before they start to double up their armies in areas. Don't hold back against the Caledonians if you can put three or preferably four onto one. Turns Four and Five are especially useful and you can often eliminate the Caledonians by sending in every single piece to raid and leaving just one behind. The Picts and Angles can often help each other across Dunedin/Lothian/Strathclyde. If the Picts do get control of the islands, remember to garrison them later against the Norsemen. Do remember, it's better to stay alive and make a deal with the Brigantes or Scots than to be reduced down to a miserable couple of units; and also ensure you get the most points in the last turn.

The Angles have a hard time. Lacking a leader with which to invade, their only advantage is moving last, and even this means they tend to have their breeding cut down by others, especially Saxons. However, it is still possible to score lots of points and survive, despite being assailed by Romano-British, Welsh, Saxons, Irish, Danes, Dubliners and Norwegians. Try to hold the balance of power in England and deprive the Saxons of Bretwalda and Kingship as often as possible. Strike at weak Saxon points to deprive him of victory points as well, for example Essex in Turn Seven. Take any hiland areas as soon as you get the chance and don't risk big attacks except perhaps to take out Arthur with an army or two – that's four or five points' worth.

Finally, the Angles have a good points-per-area score late in the game, so they are worth preserving rather than throwing away. They can also help Duke William (the traitors!).

The Normans get the chance to move and act last of all in the game. Be prepared to face Saxons, Danes, perhaps even some Welsh or Irish in the west, all intent on murder. It is absolutely essential to get maximum points from the first invasion turn and to protect William, for reinforcements will be worthless without him alive. The best points come from an east-side attack but except in very unusual circumstances you should always endeavour to kill Harold as soon as you land. Don't bother to spread out after Turn 15; stay compact and harder to attack. Encourage everyone else to harry the Norwegians! Mix your cavalry and ordinary armies to give the latter best protection and leave William behind at least one rank of defenders.

THE RED FACTION

Brigantes
Irish
Saxons
Norsemen

The Red faction is big, bad and thoroughly mean. At least, that's my unbiased opinion. To be honest, any of the factions can be played as 'spoilers' to some extent, it's just that often the Red faction seem to be better at it than others.

As enduring as the Picts (with luck) are the Brigantes. By the time the Roman reaches the Brigantes' real heartland of Galloway and Strathclyde, he should be struggling a bit, and the Red player should certainly encourage the Roman to go for the big points in Dunedin, Alban and Dalriada.

If necessary, submit to the Romans. Fighting it out is usually not worth it; although you gain perhaps 6 points for luckily killing a couple of armies, it would be much better to preserve your integrity and pick up more points later on. Try to submit with maximum population (6 armies in three areas) and remember that you move after the Roman so when he counts Limes on Turn Five, you can try to vacate point-scoring areas. With five or six armies, you should be able to hold the heartland and progress from there, especially with the early leaders. Do any deal to stay alive and help the Saxons and Norsemen later: Saxons by voting for them in Bretwalda elections; Norsemen by clearing Cumbria.

The Irish have a hard time of it. As suggested for the Scots and Dubliners, don't always land armies the turn they arrive at sea. Wait until you have a couple to be more use, unless you want to risk the odd Roman fort in Avalon or Hwicce, for example, or occupy an empty area. With a few armies on the board and the Welsh busy elsewhere, a useful attack is one focusing on Devon then Cornwall. Although harder to penetrate, they also offer better long-term security and will be hard for the Welsh to retake. Even better, it could well distract the Welsh from attacking Norsemen or Saxons elsewhere, and strengthen your faction as a whole. An alternative Irish kingdom to aim for stretches from Cumbria to Gwynedd; again this is quite hard for the Welsh to attack, however it is more vulnerable to later attacks from Danes and Dubliners.

The Saxons are quite simply the biggest nation (potentially) on the board. Only the Danes with 18 armies approach the Saxon total of 20, and the Danes are unlikely to grow like the Saxons do. The initial Saxon advantage is the early invasion against a relatively empty southern England, with Hengist as leader. This should enable you, with luck, to score a good few points killing Romano-British as well as wiping out the Jutes (this is highly recommended). Then spread out and maintain a few two-army stacks in the midlands, gradually swelling in size – you should quickly get two, then three builds a turn – and taking out Angles in the Midlands and East Anglia, pushing back stray Welsh and even making room for the odd Irishman if it scores more points. Use boats to catch the Angles off guard. If Hengist is unopposed in landing, an early foray to secure Devon is also useful, but follow up in Cornwall sooner rather than later. With Irish and Brigante help, the Red faction should make the Saxons Bretwalda and King more often than not. Once you gain momentum, you will roll on until the Danes strike. The answer is to secure your back (the West) so that you can fall back in good order and keep punching back in any weak spot. Tell the Danes if they weaken you too much, it'll be a walkover for William later. Do deals on non-aggression to get Bretwalda votes. Most of all, bulk up your front line to make it sufficiently unattractive to attackers, even if you don't want to attack anywhere yourself.

At the end of the game comes the hardest part – defending against Duke William and Harald. With any luck, the Angles and Danes should be Harald's main opponents and may well prevent him from reaching Harold. Keep Harold as well defended as possible, such as with the maximum four armies in hiland, and scatter troops around to give you the best chance of survival and a retributive strike against the Norman invaders.

The Norsemen present a task of flowing where it is easiest. The initial strike must be against Hebrides and Orkneys and holding them in Turn 13 for the best points opportunity. If you can end up with the ideal of two or three armies in Hebrides after Turn 12, these can join with the fresh invaders next turn to go for Skye and a solid base for reaching all of Britain's west coast; otherwise get points in Cumbria and annoy the Welsh or Dubliners, whoever looks the stronger. Don't be too worried about getting every last half point for visiting – the Norse are one

example of where the armies are best used preventing others from reaching juicy objectives, such as the Picts on the last turn with their three 3-point areas.

THE BLACK FACTION

Welsh
Caledonians
Jutes
Danes

At first glimpse, you might be forgiven for thinking you'd been dealt a dud hand. The Caledonians can only get six armies on the board and stand fair to be wiped out by Picts and Norsemen, but this seems an easy life compared with the Jutes' five armies and not even hilands to defend them.

The Caledonians have little to do except sit there and try to resist the inevitable. Just try to exist; honey the Pict with kind words and hope you get a build soon. As for the Jutes, their best chance for points lie in destroying Roman forts and stealing Kent on Turn Four. If Kent is defended by a Roman army and fort, go for any open Roman fort you can reach and raid it, then try for another on Turn Five with all units. If possible, delay landing the final Jute until after Hengist's invasion; that way you might just get Kent or somewhere adjacent on Turn Seven. Remember, if you land in a coastal space you can probably reach Kent by boats later, so stay out of the way of the Saxons.

The Welsh are more complicated and offer a good possibility for long term strategy. As with the Brigantes, submission to the Romans is, in the final analysis, better than being smashed to (practically) nothing. Don't let that stop you taking any chance to raid Cheshire, York or Essex, should the chance arise: by building your first armies in Powys and Clwyd this is often easy to accomplish. When the Romans withdraw, Romano-British forays may leave areas to York open. Seize these early (especially Pennines) to make it easier to get your 6 points in Turn Eight or Nine.

Your main opponents are the Red faction, so ruthlessly quash any Irish settlers and take the opportunity to nibble at the Saxon kingdom and slow its expansion. Devon and Gwent are worth defending. In the mid game, occupying one or two English areas can make all the difference in Bretwalda elections. However, the

main concentration must be on maintaining the integrity of Welsh territory and reaping maximum victory points every three turns.

Finally, the Danes also call for careful consideration. In the initial raid, look for open areas you won't have to fight over and be careful to preserve maximum numbers of units for the Turn 12 invasion. Raid Angles or Saxons depending on who holds the stronger hand and then follow this up with a good invasion (at least 16 points worth). Try to end the invasion concentrated either north or south of York – if north, aim to eliminate the Angles entirely – so that you can hold a sensible kingdom.

Use the Welsh to soften opponents and take the odd area so the Danes get a chance to be King, but don't let them get in the way of scoring points during the invasion. Later hang on as well as possible and press the advantage wherever you can. You should make deals with the Saxons and Angles if necessary at the end of the game in order to stand off the Normans and Norwegians wherever possible.

Step Back Into Those Dark Ages

One of the attractions of Britannia is that it does not exactly simulate the history of Britain. After all, this would be very tedious and unrewarding, and we would all know who was going to win. (Actually, portraying history with the game is impossible in places – for example, Harold cannot defeat Harald Hardrada at Stamford Bridge (in York) and then reach William in Sussex next turn.) However, the game must of necessity simplify things somewhat and leave out some rather interesting bits of British history.

Generally speaking, the only units in the game are armies, and only armies are deemed to control areas. There are no civil populations to hold an area peacefully (although a leader can control an area on his own) and thus every part of the realm must be garrisoned – and this is not an accurate reflection of the settlement of Britain other than in Roman and late Saxon times. Additionally, it means that the Normans, with their relatively small band of men, cannot win control of the land by placing a few men in command over a subject population.

Additionally, a dimension of historical realism is lost by the amalgamation of many peoples into different nations. The many tribes constituting the Belgae, for example, were belligerent towards each other – often more than the Romans, and some actively submitted to the Romans (whom they knew from Julius Caesar's invasion and withdrawal ninety years earlier) and attacked their 'fellows'. The Welsh were related Celtic tribes: Ordovices, Silures and Deceangli for example, who were led by the fleeing Belgae leader and hero Caractacus (or Caradoc) in defiance of the Romans.

Throughout the rest of history, nations were split by internal strife on a regular basis as successions were disputed and lesser nobles tried to seize power. There were also rebellions by peoples who had been subjugated and effectively 'wiped out' but who nevertheless regained a national identity and rose up. The first example of this was Boudicca and the Iceni who had been semi-Romanised; they took up arms when greedy administrators raped their lands and daughters and drove a path of destruction to Colchester, St Albans and beyond before being utterly defeated by Suetonius.

There are a few historical inaccuracies which are easy to correct. Two of these concern the provision of boats – a very useful commodity in the game. I would certainly allow the Saxon boats under Alfred, who was the constructor of the first English navy (one might even think about rules for naval combat).

I would also give boats to the Norwegians in Turn 16, enabling them to land forces further south than York. Turn 16 could be further enlivened by the addition of a Danish leader King Swein (also with boats and a few boatloads of troops) who raided the east coast of Britain and, assisted by Hereward the Wake, laid up in the Wash during 1070–1. I am also tempted to add other leaders, such as Caractacus, Boudicca, Hereward, other Welsh and Scottish princes down to Macbeth and so on, but this side of the game is more dangerous to tamper with, as one might upset the game's innate balance.

There are some nations I feel have been treated a little harshly – the Jutes for instance, unable ever to score any points except for areas in the south-east of England when, given the opportunity, they might have settled in any convenient spot and survived with a greater cultural identity. I believe there is also room for more

rules covering submission, a Scottish King and so on.

The Wider World

Britannia is a good game, destined to become a popular favourite with board-gamers and wargamers alike. However, as a games designer, I'm not content to let it stop there, and neither are other busy inventors I know.

Already existing as a prototype are Britannia variants covering the whole of Europe, from Persia to Britain (a six player, 36-faction game taking about 12 hours to play) and also a Middle-earth variant of my own design. This latter has some 20 factions and a rather longer time span than Britannia – it starts with the war of the Elves and Sauron in the Second Age and ends with the War of the Ring over 5000 years later!

In addition I have devised some alternative historical scenarios to add to the original game. These start with the Huns under Attila reversing their defeat by the Franks at Chalons and sending a raid against England. The Huns are followed by a possible resurgence in Roman fortunes, then later by Arabs spurred on by victories in France and Magyars raiding beyond their battles in the Low Countries. Finally there are ex-Danish Vikings who can choose either to settle in France and become the Normans, or land early in England – but this will indubitably let in the Franks, now French, under Philip I . . .

I also have plans for introducing some fantasy elements to the game, with Merlin, giants, dragons, faeries, goblins and all the other traditions rife across so many parts of the country that to leave them out would do serious injustice to the tale of Britain that Britannia tries to tell. But in the meantime, I hope you enjoy playing Britannia, one of the best new games for a long time. There are thrills enough in just getting to grips with a game where hidden danger or success can be revealed with every new turn, every surprise move, and every roll of the dice.

A Final Note

The first edition rules published by Gibbons were atrocious. Most of the ambiguities were cleared up in the second

edition, though there are still some anomalies.

VARIANT

Bidding for Blood

by Danny Victor

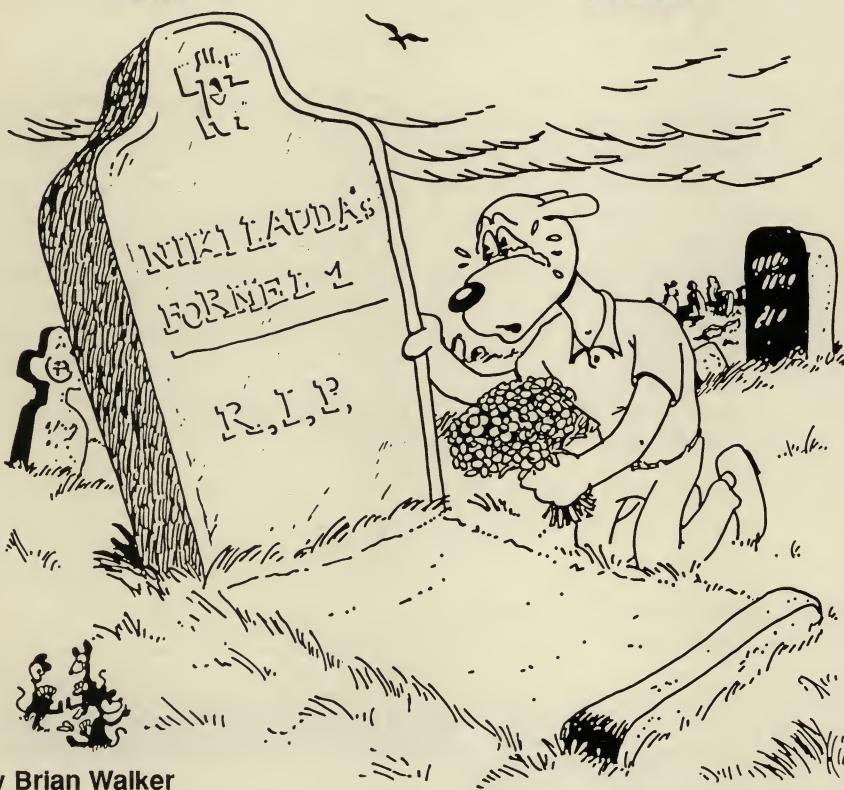
A copy of the second edition rules can be obtained by sending an SAE to Gibsons. Avalon Hill, who licensed the game from Gibsons for the American market, corrected all the errors in their set of rules.

If you're using the second edition rules you may find some eventualities which are not covered, or which seem confusing. As with any game, these are not difficult to come to agreement over after careful assessment of all applicable rules. There are some suggestions in this article which may seem contrary to the rules, and the latter should be always be taken as relevant to your games, until or unless you agree otherwise. Unfortunately, the author cannot let well alone and will always tamper with things . . .

Instead of assigning factions to players at the outset, give each player 200 points. When tribes are due to arrive on the board players must bid to control them. Victory points are scored in the normal manner. At the end of the game any unused bidding points a player has left are added to the victory points to determine a winner. This is a tried and tested variant and works with any number of players up to five. It also goes a considerable way to resolving the problems of balance in the game.

Score Sheet

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R**I****P**

by Brian Walker

With so many old games being reincarnated it's all the more amazing that this classic from Wolfgang Kramer has not yet received the kiss of life. Kramer is, of course, one of the world's most successful games designers with **Wildlife Adventure**, **Auf Achse**, and **Heimlich & Co**, still coining in the royalties. This, though, was one of his earlier efforts and was first published in 1982 when it obtained 4th place in the Spiel des Jahr

competition. To be sure it doesn't look much; perhaps the first Grand Prix to wind its way around what looks to be a gravel pit. The six plastic cars go some way towards making up for that, being nicely modelled in the current Formula One fashion. The money in the game always causes a stir, firstly because of the high quality of the card stock and secondly because of the lack of decimal points to distinguish the units. The real value



though, like any great game, is in the play itself. Unusually for a motor racing game, play starts with a bidding sequence. Each player gets dealt a hand of cards which move the cars according to the colour indicated, often in a particular sequence. On the basis of the hand dealt, each player decides which vehicle he will bid for as the six 'car cards' are revealed one by one. The highest card is a ten and if you hold one then normally this is the card you would bid for.

ON THE PISTE

The first card auctioned is placed in Pole Position and the owner starts the race by playing a card from his hand and moves the car(s) accordingly. At this point, things are pretty simple. However, parts of the track consist of only two lanes, and on two corners only one lane. As you must move the cars in the sequence stated on the card it can be seen that some major shunts can and will occur. Normally these take place on the bends – the scramble to be the lead car into the first corner is indeed a sight to behold. Once you have established such a position the normal tactic is to sit there and let the traffic queue up behind you, a strategy that gives you the opportunity to lay off high cards that would normally move other cars, until one of your opponents moves you, for like many such games, you don't hold enough cards to be able to finish under your own steam. But beware if you get moved by the same player a little too often for he could hold a 'switch' card. These cards enable cars to switch positions with each other providing there is a clear track in between. The winner of the game is the player with the most money, though winning races helps considerably towards that end. The owner of the first car across the line receives 200 000, second place 150 000, and so on. No finish, no dosh. A game consists of three races, one lap per race.

TWO LANE BLACKTOP

The game did make a reappearance a few years ago, much to the astonishment of



the designer. Herr Kramer turned up at the Nuremberg Toy Fair to find his game alive, but not quite well, and living on the ASS stand. His surprise was compounded when he discovered that the track had been changed completely without either his permission or knowledge. Being a mathematician he had carefully calculated the track length. The new version made a mockery of such precision; out went the single lanes, which were the primary source of so much amusement in the original game, and in came a two lane blacktop. The company now admits it was a 'mistake', adding, 'It's an episode we don't talk about'.

ASS had planned to republish the game this year but this idea seems to have founders. Wolfgang is keen to see the game back in print but now says he would like to adapt the game system to another theme. Virtually everybody who has played the game demands a copy, role players and wargamers included. So much so that several bootlegs are now in existence, some even having a newly designed track. Alternatively, it should be possible to get a copy of at least the second edition on the German collectors' market, many of whose members subscribe to this very magazine. Just be prepared to give up something valuable in return.

No article on a game though, would be complete with the addition of some optional rules from Alan R Moon. Here he goes again:

FORMEL EINS MODIFICATIONS

Take out the white 10 card, which allows you to move any car. This is simply too powerful.

Instead of cars switching places when the switch card is played (this is simply too silly), stipulate that cars may only *pull alongside*, with the usual proviso that the track in front is clear.

Always deal out an even amount of cards. If there are any surplus then select one at



random and nominate this as the 'starter' card; cars move as stated on the card but the 'move any car' instruction is ignored. Play then proceeds with the owner of the pole position car and clockwise thereon. If the deal works out even then the owner of the pole position car starts the game.

Take out one card per player. This will make it much tougher to finish.

Going round the outside of a corner should take longer, therefore double the amount of spaces required to take a bend on the outside, by use of either a pen or marker.

If there is a player without a car by the time the sixth car is auctioned then that player must pay 30 000 for the car. Similarly, if there are two players without cars

when the fifth car comes up for auction then bidding must start at 30 000.

All of these changes were approved by the game's designer.

The following is a variant by Peter Gehrmann which introduces blackmail and extortion and was approved by no one.

GRAFT ON THE GRID

On his turn a player may reveal the card he is to play and solicit cash offers to play it/not to play it. Once an offer has been accepted the deal must be honoured. In this variant it is not necessary to have a car to compete in the race. **G**

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STRATEGY SEMINAR



by Brian Walker

As anyone who has played with me will tell you (all too loudly), I'm not the world's greatest games player. Nevertheless, there are a few games I've managed to delude myself into thinking that I play well. One of these is Die Macher, a game based on the German elections, and arguably one of the most sophisticated, in terms of game mechanics, on the market. For the increasing number of owners of this game I would like to share some of the pearls of wisdom I acquired on the hustings. Obviously it's impossible to suggest a definitive strategy in a game of such changing fortunes, so I'll suffice by concentrating on opening moves and the first election.

Preliminaries

The first thing you have to do is to jettison two members of your shadow cabinet. This is one of the easier decisions to make in the game. Generally I discard the Fraktionsführer and the Partieboss on the basis that the junior ministers perform many of the same actions at cheaper cost. The Kanzler I always like to keep for that +3 popularity. Expensive, sure, but worth the dough in a crisis. *Never* get rid of your

**NEVER GET RID OF
YOUR JUNIOR
MINISTERS**



junior ministers. They offer tremendous value for money.

The next step is to cast your freebies, starting with the votes. This is normally a pretty tough choice, especially if you are going first. Ideally, you want to find a region where you have at least two matching choices. But things are usually not that simple so stay cool, and be patient. Above all try to avoid getting in a fight with an opponent at this stage, wasting your valuable resources to possibly finish second in an election is not a sound strategy. If you do go first and there is no obvious choice as to where to place your first five votes, split them up between the four regions and wait to see what your opponents do. By the time you get round to placing your media disc and campaign days, you should have a clearer picture of the region where you want to mount a serious campaign. Once this has been determined, plough all your resources into that region and get ready to kick ass. But remember, fifty votes is the maximum you can obtain, so don't waste cash trying to get more.

Brighton, Brighton

Generally I like to keep my resources as long as possible until I see which way the game is swinging, but this is not always possible with the conferences. If two of your opponents are already agreed on a particular program then get in quick and hold a special conference (cost: 500), grabbing the last remaining program card for that issue while doing so, thus avoiding becoming an early victim of a three party squeeze (there are only three policies of each type). Likewise, if there are two policies your opponents are agreed upon, then hold a major conference (cost: 700). The only other justification for making this move would be that it would enable me to change my program in such a way as to win the first election, thereby getting an instant return on my investment.

If you have the cash to play them don't hang on to your conference markers for too long, especially the cheap ones. Always try to use them to obtain party bases rather than change programs. Remember, this way they earn you money after every election.

TIME TO SEND IN THE CROOKS



Smear Those Reds

Time to send in the crooks. At this stage you can't really afford too much. In an area where I think I have a chance of winning and getting control of the media, I'll probably send in the Außenminister to boost my popularity. Without media control this is a risky move as some sneak could bang you down by getting hold of an unfavourable opinion poll.

If one of your opponents looks like he is running away with the first election then send in the Generalsekretär to launch a smear campaign. He probably won't have enough dough left to buy an opinion poll. Watch the smug grin on his face disappear. A dirty trick, I agree, but then that's politics. It's probably unwise to make this play though against those tiresome vindictive types that one so often comes across.

Always try to get the debate marker onto one of your policies. This will give your vote total a substantial boost and at little cost if you send in one of your junior ministers.

Remember The SDP

If you can force a coalition and win an election on somebody else's coattails, great. Let them pay the bills. This is an-

STICK THE BOOT IN



other reason for holding a major conference in phase 1 (change two programs to match theirs), but only do this if they already have a coalition card face up in the region. Also, make sure you have a media disc in the region, otherwise your victory will be a hollow one.

Murdoch Mania

Media discs are undoubtedly one of your most important resources, so use them sparingly. Again, try not to get locked in a media war early on when your reserves are slender. Better to relinquish power to an opponent than waste cash trying to create a stalemate. Your day will come. It's always worth playing a disc into one of the lower regions especially if you are trying to win the first election. At the start of the game the floating opinion pool is pretty small, so even if you have the power to change things, chances are the opinion you seek is not available. However, if you have media control in one of the lower regions you may be able to switch opinions. Even going as far as to replace a positive agreement with one you violently disagree with, simply to make the former available for the election currently taking place (this tactic applies throughout the game).

Campaign Trail

The campaign days represent the best value for money in the game. Always place as many as you can afford though save some cash for the opinion polls. In the early elections don't fanny around. Stick them in a region you're serious about, but *always* put at least one in the current election, more if you have the dough as the votes they represent will give you an instant cash return.

Swingorama

Yes, it's opinion poll time. Of course it's nice to have lots but you don't have the cash so bid carefully. Do not bid in an area where you have media control if your popularity is up, or if you can reach 50 votes any other way, at least in the early stages. Save your money for a region where you can be hurt. If you should obtain an poll that is unfavourable to your own prospects then try to hammer the leader in that region. Stick the boot in, drop his popularity and raise that of a no-hoper. Only employ this tactic if it does real damage. Otherwise you'll be catching vindictive fall-out for nothing.

The Hustings Hustle

To convert, or not to convert. That should be the question. As a rule of thumb I'd say yes when your popularity is up, and no when it is down. An exception to the former is when you want to go last in a turn, perhaps say, in the shadow cabinet phase when you want to kick somebody's media disc out without fear of instant revenge. If your popularity is only at par, it's worth converting if that will give you an overall majority, and equally to stop one of your opponents obtaining the same.

If your popularity is down always convert at least one as fractions are rounded up.

Flick Flack

Bribes are tricky things, as any politician will tell you. When you see one of your opponents coining in the cash after an election victory while you're on your uppers, the temptation to visit Herr Flick for an illegal donation is indeed great but must be resisted unless the situation is really desperate.

The potential loss of party bases could be disastrous in the long term. Visit the bank

if you must and hit the manager for a plain brown envelope. If you're okay for cash just sit back and collect the 500 risk free, or simply do nothing.

General Tactics

When you contest an election pull out all the stops and aim to hit at least 50 votes. Being a runner-up is nowhere, so be a winner. As someone once said of life in America: 'Son, there are no second acts.'

Always stay in tune with what is happening in Bonn. Agreements count as a big modifier at the end. Check in advance who is likely to win the election and what opinions he is likely to place in Bonn. If he's going to place two that look likely to stay there, then hold a major conference and grab them from the program deck, if available.

Don't underestimate the power of votes. In an election game this may sound strange, but some players get so carried away with modifiers they forget about the nitty gritty.

Bribes Are Tricky



Try to get your media discs in early on the last election. Experience has shown that this can often be the decider.

The above advice carries no guarantee of success, but follow it and you should be there at the finish. If not, then take consolation in the words of a losing American senator on the stump: 'The people have spoken, the bastards.' G

Die Macher is published in Germany by Moskito Games. It is available in the UK by mail order: see the ad on page 25.

'OWZAT!

Alf Compton (68 not out) talks to our editor about the trials and tribulations of publishing a dream.

Cricket, lovely cricket. Still, despite the ravages of professionalism, a quintessentially English sport. And yet, the number of satisfactory games on the subject could be counted on a couple of spinning fingers. The card game **Armchair Cricket** immediately springs to mind, as does the excellent simulation from Lambourne Games, **Test Match Cricket**.

Add to the score pad **Wicketz** (*reviewed last issue*). A spectacular production of the sort which went out of fashion with dandelion and burdock. What could possess anyone to produce such a terrible beauty? To find out, I skipped through the green green grass of Surrey, into the leafy lanes, down in Dingly Dell. Or Horsley, if you prefer. For this is the home of Alf Compton (no relation), creator of this cricketing *Mona Lisa*. Alf's visits to the Oval are few and far between though, for he be a Hampshire man, as can be detected from his burr, which recalls the magnificent John Arlott.

The idea for the game, he confides, was the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition, which, sadly, was only realised following the death of his wife three years ago. Not for the first time in the history of the world, the tragedy provided him with the necessary singleness of mind to enable the idea to become a reality. Indeed, the energy with which the sprightly Alf goes about the task of promoting and selling the game is remarkable, especially considering that he is well past retirement age.

Modestly, he is quick to sing the praises of others, especially his family: 'They were tremendous really, chipping in with this and that. My son, for example, ran all the (512) cards off on a word processor. Unfortunately we had a very slow printer so it took 24 hours. It meant, though, that we could just hand the printouts to the printer and save on typesetting costs. The

family then did all the collating. Although I only made 200 games, 512 x 200 is a lot of collating.'

One of the most delightful features of the game are the 22 miniatures, plus umpires and sightscreens. Where in the Lord's name did they come from, Alf? 'Right from the start I was determined not to use pawns or suchlike,' he admits. 'I must have traipsed through every village in Southern England trying to find something suitable. Sometimes I'd just find one or two figures, but eventually I had eleven on which to base a prototype. Mostly they were refugees from **Subbuteo Cricket**. This gave me the idea to contact Waddingtons (*the manufacturers of the game – Ed*). I received a very nice letter back from Trevor James advising me where they were made, though he doubted whether there would be any left. As luck would have it they had quite a few, and also they still had the injection moulds. They were all white, of course, I did the painting myself.'

One of the most extraordinary features of the game is the scoreboard – a heavy-weight mini replica with all sorts of mysterious dials, and a sure fire reject should the game ever be taken up by a major manufacturer. 'Again my son was a big help on that one,' confides Alf. 'All together it contains 18 different wheels of 5 different sizes. The props at the back are dinner plate holders which we bought from a company in Manchester.'

Another figure whose help proved to be invaluable was former England slow left armer and *enfant terrible*, Phil Edmonds, now the highly successful owner of **Stocks**, a Hertfordshire country club. 'Phil believed in the game right from the start, and despite being very busy with his own projects still found time to give me a hand promoting it,' says Alf. If only the game had been more controversial, Frances Edmonds could have written a book about it, thereby prompting an sellout, I think to myself.

Nevertheless, having already sold half of the limited edition of 200, Alf envisages no great difficulty in selling the rest. However, rather than just sit back and



congratulate himself on having made a valuable offering to the kingdom of games, Alf would like to see the game produced commercially so that more people may enjoy it. He has undertaken this task with his customary vigour. Letters were dispatched to companies who had so much as *thought* of producing a game. Inevitably, the rebuffs arrived quicker than a Patrick Patterson bouncer. 'Gibsons said point blank that they never make sports games,' explains Alf. 'Waddingtons were interested, but they didn't feel that they could produce the game cheaply enough for it to sell under £15, which is their ceiling, though personally I think people will pay a lot more than that providing the quality is there.'

At the time of writing a major manufacturer had expressed interest so all was not lost. Even as we were talking Alf was developing a contingency plan to sell the game in Australia.

Profit is not the name of this game though. Despite the high price of the game (£45), Alf reckons he will just about break even if the game sells out. Not that this bothers him in the slightest. Lest this leaves you with the impression that the project was simply a rich man's fancy, it's worth pointing out something Alf said to me on my way home: 'I've been a working man and a socialist all my life. I'm not going to change now.'

Owzat? Jolly good show, I'd say.

VARIANTS

Palace of Varieties

*Just when you thought it was safe to open a set of rules...
More modifications to favourite games.*



by Stuart Dagger

1. At the start of the game each player receives 6 campaign cards. These are all to be read as 'victim loses 200 000 votes', even though some of them say 400 000. The 'region stands firm' cards are not used.

2. Party leaders begin the game in a region of the player's own choosing. On each turn they have the option of either staying put or moving to another region which is adjacent by road to their present one. This takes place at the start of a player's turn.

3. If a player is at 13 or less on the popularity index, his options each turn are:

- a. Play one token in the region where his leader is situated and one in a region which is adjacent by road
- b. Play two tokens in the leader's current region
- c. Just play one token in this region
- d. Play one token and one campaign card in this region

- e. Just play one campaign card in this region
- f. Play one card in this region and one in a region which is adjacent by road
- g. Play nothing

If a player is at 14 or greater, a and b are no longer permitted, that is the option of playing two tokens is lost.

4. When a campaign card is played against a player, it is, within any restrictions imposed by the card, the victim's choice as to which token is removed. The removed token may be a 'hollow promise'.

5. **Absentee Voters:** A player picks up one of these tokens the first time he reaches 6 on the popularity index, a second the first time he reaches 12 and two more the first time he reaches 16.

6. **Floating Voters:** These are acquired in much the same way as are Absentee Voters. A player gets one the first time he reaches 4 on the index, and two the first time he reaches each of 8, 10 and 14.

7. With both Absentee Voters and Floating Voters it is the player's choice as to which of the available tokens he takes.

8. The first player to reach 20 on the popularity index may do two of the following:

- a. Place a bonus token in the current region or in one adjacent by road
- b. Take an Absentee Voter token
- c. Take a Floating Voter token

The two options taken do not have to be different, and b and c have a 'subject to

availability' proviso. Any player at 19 on the index when the leader reaches 20 may do one of a, b and c. The order for all this is: the leader's first choice, then the 19's in turn order and then the leader's second choice. If for some reason it is not possible for all those entitled to this end of campaign bonus to receive it, the process stops after the leader's first choice.

9. During the election, players place one floating vote token per turn.

Election was published by Intellect in 1972. It is now out of print.



CIVILISING THE CELTS

by Ben Butterfield

Whenever I play Civilization, the race I am least likely to choose are the Asians. The argument goes something like this:

1. It's never prudent to have Asia and Assyria in the same game; they'd drastically restrict each other's development in the early rounds, while other players could develop normally.

2. On several points, Assyria is a slightly better choice (chiefly its AST track, but also the speed with which it can expand around the edge of the Black Sea).

3. Therefore, no Asia.

To which I might add that the Asian pieces are coloured an absolutely horrible Salmon Pink which nobody would be caught DEAD wearing in 2000 BC.

But then, since you've *paid* for those pieces, you still might want to do something with them. Hence, the point (finally) of this article: why not introduce the Celts into *Civilisation*?

Honestly, I believe the Celts (I don't think there's any set way of pronouncing this; to me they're the Kelts, and the Selts are a basketball team – a very good one too, I hear) could be an enjoyable addition, particularly if you take care to give them an interesting and competitive AST track. Incorporating them would bend history only slightly, for though they were never a mediterranean power, they occupied much of Europe at one time or another. And anyway, the game's designer didn't want *Civilisation* to reflect history *exactly*. All you'd have to do is use the Asian counters, and maybe make a couple of special adaptations for the sake of play balance.

As I see it, the Celts' starting point would be the upper left-hand corner of the board – the one with the *Civilisation* logo in it. That would make their 'natural position' virtually the same as Illyria's. Now, to justify having two civilisations lined up for the same area on the board, we ought

to differentiate between them in other ways. I would give the Celts a slightly better AST track, while placing that track at the *top* of the chart; that way, they get the last pick of civilisation cards.

A copy of one good track is reproduced here, so you can simply photocopy it, cut it out and attach it to your AST chart. In the general way in which the chart reflects actual history, this is reasonably accurate. However, this does give the Celts just about the easiest track of all; so some disadvantage should be meted out elsewhere.

Several other things could be juggled to fine tune the relative strength of the Celts: using the original Asian AST track (preferably with a 1200 finish), using that track and still requiring the Celts to pick civilisation cards last, splitting their starting area so that it takes them an extra turn to reach city sites at the outset. I've already experimented with the latter. I modified my board so that the central 'I' in the *Civilisation* logo divides the whole land area (instead of a five point area, I've made it a three on one side and a two on the other. This gives the Celts an extra space to move through when they're ex-

panding toward their initial city sites. This *does* make it decidedly harder for them to build more than four cities as they leave the Stone Age (the Illyrians – properly played in a six player game – can build *six cities* this point).

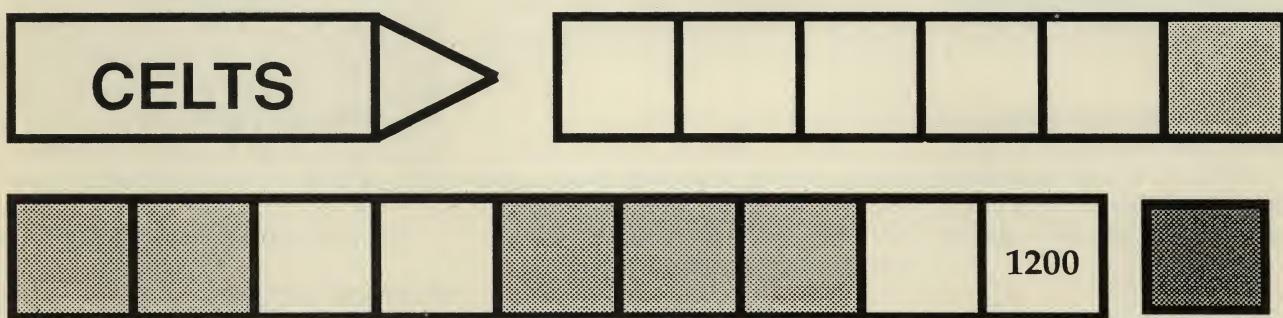
All in all, I think this could prove an enjoyable option. For those of you who are steadfast Asia fans, you can always use some *other* set of pieces to represent the Celts.

I'm still stuck with one problem, though. Every potential civilisation in the game is named as if for a country, not a people or tribe. As far as I know, the Celts never *had* one particular country. Do they represent Gaul? Noricum? Halstatt? The Alps? Der Vaterland?

The Salmon Pink, however, is no longer a problem. I took care of that with a Magic Marker (Pale green, believe it or not).

Civilisation is published by Avalon Hill, price £22.95.

This variant first appeared in The Washington Gamer.



RAILWAY RIVALS

Freight Rivals

by Derek Carver

Briefly, the game is designing your own railway network (as in RR) and then using your twelve-truck train to collect and deliver freight as efficiently as possible.

Special equipment needed over and above normal *Railway Rivals*:

(This is the equipment *we* use. You might choose to vary this depending on what bits and pieces you have around).

100 15x15x10mm (4-blip) LEGO bricks. These represent freight.

10 pairs of LEGO bricks (1-blip) in different shapes or colours (you would need 12 pairs if up to six play). You can get these in red/black/white/yellow/blue/clear in 7mm square or in cylindrical form. These represent destination indicators.

A strip of card for each player drawn up to accommodate 12 of the freight bricks. We draw ours in the form of engines with 12 trucks which is more fun.

A pile of paper roughly 6x7cm plain or stencilled. These are freight dockets.

Note: it is best to restrict your games to the RR maps with the larger hexes.

The Rules

You draw your track in precisely the same way as normal *Railway Rivals*.

When the final station has been linked up, *Freight Rivals* takes over. The variant uses only the actual towns. The RR 'any port' etc – usually on a roll of 11 or 66 – is ignored and rerolled.

All players put a train marker in their colour at any station on their line. This is done in sequence beginning with the player to the left of the player terminating the building.

Each player then takes it in turn to generate two lots of freight. Two six-sided dice are rolled three times for each lot. The first roll is the amount of freight, the second is where it is going from, the third is where it is going to. A pile of freight bricks is put on the starting station. You then take one of the destination indicator pairs; put one on top of the pile of freight and one on the destination town. Players can then see at a glance where each consignment has to go. While you are doing this a player will be writing out a freight docket. This shows 'From', 'To', 'Size of Load', 'Distance' and 'Value' (see illustration – you may like to photocopy this, or design your own). The distance is the distance between the two towns by the least number of hexes (excluding over water). This is 'as the crow flies' (assuming he zig-zags!) and *not* by the shortest railway route. Journeys of less than 5 hexes are rerolled. To obtain the 'value' you multiply the size of the load by the distance. Having made out the freight docket you put this at the end of the map (we place them in numerical order of pickup stations for easy reference). After each player has rolled for two lots the game continues.

Players must now pick up and deliver freight. Players must always pick up complete consignments (never just part of it) and at no time can they carry in excess of 12 bricks. They can have on board as many consignments as they wish (in fact their aim must be to keep their train as full as possible).

The player who first placed his train marker starts. If he has been lucky and freight has been generated at the station at which he is starting and he likes the look of it he can at once pick it up and load it on to his train. He at the same time takes the freight docket. He may then move.

On his turn each player rolls a die. His train may be moved to a maximum of twice the die roll on his own track and equal to the die roll on other tracks. He discards the rest of the die roll if in his turn he a) picks up or drops off freight, or b) wishes to enter a line of a different colour to the one he is on.

From:	To:
Size of load:	
Distance:	<hr/>
Value:	

When a load is delivered play is interrupted. The appropriate number of LEGO bricks are handed to the 'banker' together with the freight docket, and the player is paid out. Players (starting with the one on his left) can then try to build if they wish. They roll a die and if they roll a 1 or a 6 permission is given. There is no restriction on how much building they do but the cost is ten times the amounts for normal **Railway Rivals** (this is because the rewards are greater). The player who delivered the load then rolls for a new lot of freight which is put on the board as at the beginning of the game. This means there are always the equivalent of two loads per player in play. Play then continues.

Entering another player's line

You must terminate your turn and pay the player who line you wish to use 20 (if before you move off a more attractive load of freight has been generated which dissuades you from using his line next turn that's too bad for you. You've lost your 20!). Having paid this you may use his network without further payment all the

time you remain on it. But should you come off (even for just one hex) you must pay to re-enter it. This means that in the building stage you try to avoid gaps of just a single or a couple of hexes – in **Freight Rivals** these can be expensive and a slowing down factor, whereas in **Railway Rivals** they are not.

Selling freight dockets

It might be in your interest to carry freight just part way and sell the load to another player to deliver. You negotiate a price for the freight docket which is handed over at the moment you drop off the freight at a prearranged junction (this need not be a town). Only the owner of the docket may pick this up and he is penalised twice its value if it is still sitting at the side of the track at the end of the game!

The end of the game

We always arrange to end at a certain time. To avoid panic moving at the end we agree on a time from which we allow each player ten more moves (because players are mostly concerned with just delivering at this stage rather than picking up new loads we find that ten rounds only takes about 20 minutes). The winner is the player with the most money. Undelivered loads are of no value.

Some players prefer that each station comes up an equal number of times. This has not the significance in FR as in RR because it depends on where your train is at the time and whether it has capacity to pick up the load. But if you prefer this you can put the numbers of the stations into a container and pick them out instead of die rolling. Or you can pick out one and roll for the other. The system you use is your choice.

Below is an example of a freight docket made out for a consignment of 7 to go from Bolton (33) to Leicester (44) on the London to Liverpool (Game B) **Railway Rivals** map.

You needn't, of course, have the dockets stencilled. If written on plain paper it would be quite clear what each figure stands for.

Don't forget your turn ends if you stop to drop off or pick up freight or if you wish to enter a line of a different colour (even if it is back onto your own line).

Railway Rivals is published by Rostherne Games, price £6.95.

From:	To:
33 → 44	
Size of load:	7
Distance:	<hr/> 19
Value:	133

VIVA LAS VEGAS!

*Editor Brian Walker files
reports on Total Confusion, the
GAMA convention, and the
Texas weather.*

When asked, our American Desk advised me that the winter in New England had been 'very mild'. So what, I pondered, was all this white stuff I espied on the ground when flight TW753 hit the Boston tarmac? For sure it wasn't sugar. I guess this apparent meteorological gaffe was just another of those misunderstandings that seem to occur so often with our ex colonial buddies. The purpose of the trip was to visit GAMA (Game Manufacturers of America) who were holding a convention in Las Vegas, and to take in some of the local (gaming) colour *en route*. Fortunately my visit coincided with a local (Massachusetts) convention, Total Confusion - an event which quickly lived down to its name. Total organisation would have been more apt. The con was held in the palatial surroundings of the Sheraton Hotel, Worcester. Even if you didn't know there was a con being held you would have soon guessed as costumes of every type competed for optical attention in the hotel lobby, causing one (genuine) guest to remark that the hotel was 'very nice, but the people dress real strange here'.

It quickly became clear that tournaments were the order of the day. If you just wanted to play a few ad hoc games, okay, nothing to stop you, except lack of opponents. From the organisers' point of view such a strategy made commercial sense as there was a \$2 entry fee per tournament, and to be fair there were a lot of tournaments: everything from AD&D to **Empire Builder**. The former attracted a massive entry, as might be expected. The other popular event was a **Battletech** tournament with beautifully painted miniatures, while a few doors away a modish looking monitor beamed out Japanese animation, which in the comic world is this year's big thing. Not quite as incongruous as you might at first think, for the crossover between games and co-



Total Confusion, or a game of Europa?

mics in the US is quite considerable. Showing no interest whatsoever in oriental esoterica, the Desk entered a Titan tournament but returned after 45 minutes, 44 minutes later than expected. As usual at these events there was a 'dealer area', the most interesting stand in which belonged to one 'Crazy Egor'. European collectors would have had a great time drooling over such out of print Avalon Hill gems like C&O, B&O (\$60), Dispatcher (\$50), or Le Mans (\$30), while yours truly was able to purchase 3M's High Bid for a mere \$12.

To get an idea of the *modus operandi* of the con I spoke to organiser Alan Chiras: 'Total Confusion is one of the top ten gaming conventions in the US right now,' he told me. 'Our attendance is going up each year instead of down, and our convention makes money. We are a pro-profit organisation. By generating cash we are able to stage more conventions. We don't make a lot of money on this, we are specifically doing this for the adventure gaming public in New England which has not had an outlet like this before.'

But what about the stipulation that there should be no 'skimpy costumes'? Moral rearment, or what? Alan claims sarcasm as a defence: 'There's a lot of puritan feeling here in New England

which is why I put that sarcastic phrase on the flyer. It's also pretty cold here at this time of year.'

Why Total Confusion? Everything seems pretty organised: 'Our motto this year is Total Confusion Makes Perfect Sense. We believe we have a good organised system. We run three time slots each day (for the tournaments), which causes us to work in waves, but organisation wise it comes out better. If the players don't arrive on time it's their fault. We don't feel any responsibility to have to entertain them.'

You place a pretty big emphasis on tournaments: 'This is what players want. Our bread and butter is AD&D tournaments. My personal preference is for military simulations but the sign up rate is pretty low. I've seen the way AD&D players play it blindly like there is no other adventure game on the market. However, these events are the ones that sell out first. As for the industry in general, I feel that there is not so much of a decline in adventure gaming as there is a lack of an ability to network them, to find other opponents, which is one of the reasons why we hold this con.'

From Total Confusion, to well, total confusion. The scene: Boston's Logan Airport, one of the many homes of Eas-

tern Airlines, who today have decided to go on strike, sending their erstwhile passengers into the grateful, but inadequate arms of other airlines. To confuse matters further, my own flight to Las Vegas via Dallas has been cancelled because snow in the land of Ewing Oil prevented take-off of the inbound flight, and American Airlines, possessing only one plane, were incapable of finding a replacement jet. Eventually I find an airline with a plane and a few hours later I'm looking down at the yellow rose of Texas, which sure enough, has turned a whiter shade of pale. The flight arrives late but this is now quite a normal feature of American flying, as is the practice of showing dreary in-flight TV shows festooned with ads, instead of movies. Not only that, they *repeat* them! In accordance with the new philosophy, my connecting flight is late also. Unfortunately, my baggage, containing precious copies of this periodical, arrives 24 hours after the plane. More fortunate, as it turns out, than one member of the GDW staff who was still wearing the same socks after three days.

The Tropicana Hotel is another of those plastic paradises at which Las Vegas excels. The 'island', upon which the GAMA convention is being held, contains creatures even more exotic than the gamblers who slavishly feed the omnipresent slots, while a collection of macaws, cockatoos, and African Blues provide a squawking accompaniment to the general cacophony as one glides along the moving walkway into the convention hall proper.

The purpose of the visit, in case you were wondering, was twofold: 1) to establish new distribution channels for this magazine, and 2) To examine the menu of new American releases for this year. Although the former makes gripping reading, I assume you're hungry so without further ado *J'propose l'menu Americain '89.*

Chaosium

Several old wines in new bottles here; *Guide to Cthulhu Monsters* is now back in print, as are *HPL Dreamlands*, and *Cthulhu by Gaslight*. *Call of Cthulhu* itself has been revised and reprinted in a softback edition and should be in the shops now. On the way shortly should be *Prince Valiant - The Story Telling Game*, while April sees the release of *The Great Old Ones*, a new *Call of Cthulhu* adventure. Head Chef Greg Stafford thanks me for the reviews of the *RuneQuest* material and promises more shortly.

West End

With so many rumours flying around, including the possible sale of the company, the guys in the kitchen have opted for a staple diet, which in this case means *Star Wars* for starters, main course, and dessert. One item that will definitely not be on the menu this year is the Civil War quad game. Production costs had soared to the level where a \$70 retail price tag was anticipated, so the ingredients were put on ice.



'Holy batpictures, these guys read comics too!'

Task Force Games

A revamped cuisine here, the most interesting of which looks to be *Lift Off*, the first release in the *Conquest of Space* game series. Expect this dish to be ready in June. For those looking for something meatier, *East Wind Rain* makes a reappearance, while the company's bread and butter, *Star Fleet Battles* runs and runs. The parent company of TFG is New World Computing, who were responsible for the excellent *Might & Magic* computer game. No surprise then to learn that a boardgame version of the same is to be released by Task Force this summer.

I.C.E.

Lots of new dishes from this busy company with new supplements for all their role-playing systems such as *Middle Earth*, *Rolemaster*, and *Hero*, being released every month.

Mayfair Games

Hot on the heels of the limited edition of *Family Business*, (see review GI #3) comes the unlimited edition of the same. This version features a wall upon which to line up the mob, and great artwork by David Bromley who, for the technically minded, used a Apple Macintosh II loaded with Adobe Illustrator 88 software together with a Linotronic 300 colour printer. The *Thieves World* boardgame is to be republished, as is a revised version of *ElfQuest*. Fans of *Empire Builder* will be pleased to hear that an expansion kit, featuring a map of Mexico and delivery cards, is to be released soon.

Monarch Avalon

The masters of *haute cuisine* launch their new fast food menu. Big things are expected of *Past Lives* - a game in which players can discover whether they were 'great historical figures' (such as a games company president), or 'dirty rotten scoundrels' (such as a journalist). The artwork is by Joe Beserra - 'the only living US artist whose work hangs in the Louvre'. Also just out of the oven is *Blind Justice - The Game of Lawsuits*, and *Luck or Logic - The Game of Riddles*.

Those looking for more substantial fare will be pleased to hear that a couple of Derek Carver concoctions (*Showbiz* and

New World) are in the pot and should be served later this year.

Steve Jackson Games

The *surpris du jour* here is **Guilty Party - Murder on the Casting Couch**, a one-off scenario along the lines of **How to Host a Murder Party**.

FASA

Lots of side dishes here to go with the **Battletech** main course, while their **Circus Imperium** chariot racing game is nicely supplemented by a series of Ral Partha miniatures.

WWW

World Wide Wargames had a very ambitious programme including publications as well as games. April sees the release of the *Sports Gamer*, a magazine intended to reflect the growing market of sports replay games. A new card game **Modern Naval War** is expected to be shipped in June along with **Hitler's Last Gamble** and **Tomorrow the World**.

The rest of the show is made up of distributors and one man companies: among the latter is **Arbitrage**. Older readers may recognize this as **Tycoon**, which was published under licence by Parker Bros way back when. Also present are Game Inventors of America Inc, an umbrella organisation founded by Yaquinto's Steve Peek. Sadly they have nothing near as good as Steve's own **Dallas**. 'Yeah, that was a fine game,' he tells me in his southern drawl. 'The problem was nobody took it seriously because of the TV show.' One game which catches my eye is the **Loving Game**, the aim of which is to 'improve or enhance your present day relationship'. Sadly, the game is only rated 'PG'. Finally we come to the 'only in America category'. Where else would you find **Pizza Wars**? The introduction says it all: 'Pizza and wargaming represent a natural combination, which, until the time of this publication, has remained sadly undeveloped'. Accompanying this very funny product is the **Rescue Olly North** game in which a player controls both the liberal bailiffs and commie attorneys, as well as the redneck hordes whose task it is to storm the courtroom and liberate this most American of heroes. At the various seminars which are taking place, there are constant references to 'adven-

ture gaming'. Though not meant as a euphemism, it serves that purpose as both wargaming and fantasy role playing conjure up negative images in the minds of Mr and Mrs Average, simply because of the bad rap they have had in the mass media. Outside the convention area there is a very different type of adventure gaming going on which doesn't look much fun at all, unless sitting on a stool solemnly feeding coins into a chrome monster is your idea of fun. The overriding impression is that it would take more than a million dollars to put some happiness back onto these faces. But now, as Las Vegas's favourite son would say; the end is near, it's time to draw the final curtain. From the trade's point of view it was a success and the attendance was up considerably on last year. From the punter's point of view though, there was not a lot to get excited about. Too many companies resting on their laurels and not enough innovation. One exception to this was TSR; a company that is trying to do something different. Look out for **Maxi-Bourse** and **High Rise**, and don't forget their underrated series of abstract games like **Chase**. Like the rest of the games mentioned in this report, they will be reviewed in depth in future issues. CH

Deal • Me • In

A card game without cards?

You bet!

Deal me in and start again across the board or up and down, place your tiles, the fun goes round

A thirty minute 'thrilling' game.

Available from Harrods in Knightsbridge, Esdevium Games, Aldershot and Just Games of London

Price £19.95



The Twilight Zone

John Harrington continues his survey of fanzines with a look at the sportier offerings.



There is a large number of people in the games hobby who have fantasies about being football managers. Perhaps they are masochists with an unfulfilled desire to experience the agony of an ulcer.

They are well served by 20 or 30 sports game zines, most of which offer soccer management games of varying difficulty and realism. These games are similar to those football manager games offered on most makes of computer these days, with two major differences:

One, the games are generally better. The first postal soccer management game predates the advent of similar computer games by six or seven years, and the benefit of the extra years of playtesting is evident.

Two, you play against real players, not a computer. Some leagues run to a hundred players, with a further dozen or so people on the waiting list.

Most of the games are mathematical number games dressed up with a football theme. Typically, managers are in charge of a squad of players. Each soccer player is given a numerical value which can be improved throughout the season by coaching, but which can also be reduced owing to the effects of injuring and aging. Managers buy and sell players, choose their sides, adopt specific tactics (offside, play hard, five at the back, overlapping full backs – you name it) and try to win matches.

Matches are adjudicated by comparing player values and thereby calculating the probabilities of goals being scored. As in real football, there is always the chance of an upset. Success is rewarded by high league position or a cup run, maybe even

a trophy; failure is characterised by relegation and immense frustration which can only be assuaged by whining to the adjudicator that the dice are rolling against you!

Other sports receive similar treatment including oxing, grand prix motor racing, cricket, horse racing and, very trendy at the moment, cycle racing. Among the commercially available games which have been converted to postal play are **Title Bout** (boxing), **Win, Place & Show** and **Jockey** (both horse racing), **Speed Circuit** (motor racing), **Pennant Race** (baseball), **Paydirt** and even **Statis Pro Football** (American football).

Details of these zines can also be found in *Mission From God* (address given last issue). I'm by no means an expert on sports zines, but it seems to me that many people who play the football management games have little or no interest in football at all, so do not expect the zines to feature chat articles about the sport.

HYBRIDS

Much as we like to pigeon-hole zines, it just is not possible. If you take the zine I co-edit, it features two sports games, four non-sports games, no **Diplomacy**, a lot of chat and some fantasy role-playing. Try categorising that.

Such cross-fertilisation is by no means unusual. In the end we return to that glib phrase that there are only two types of zine: good ones and bad ones. A zine can be overpriced, scruffy, irregular, badly laid out, contain games inefficiently adjudicated and yet, if you rip the envelope open eagerly when it arrives, it can still be a good zine.

GI

Die Macher

(THE FIXERS)

'Flawless' —Alan R Moon

'One of the best games ever made' —Brian Walker

'A masterpiece' —Derek Carver

Playing time: 4 hours

Die Macher is published in Germany by Moskito Games, but is available with rules in English from **Games International**.

Price £25 + £3 P&P. VISA, Access and cheques accepted.

GI, Lamerton House, 23a High Street,
Ealing, London W5 5DF.

CONSUMER GUIDE

For those who have just tuned in, we present our entirely subjective guide to what's what, and what's not. Titles will come and go each month, though the whimsy of our selection process should not be allowed to detract from the usefulness of such a compendium.

Acquire (Avalon Hill)
Maybe a little dry for family play but a classic game nevertheless. 2-6 players attempting to build hotel chains and takeover other chains for maximum profits. £17.95.



Broadway (TSR)
Good old-fashioned family game in which players invest in musicals then attempt to present them on the Great White Way. 4-6 players. £13.95

Buck Rogers (TSR)
First class Risk in space game with great

components. (Reviewed in issue #2.) £19.95.

Chase (TSR)

Excellent 2-player abstract game which has not yet had the success it deserved. £7.99.

Consulting Detective (Sleuth Publications)

Hard boiled and tough to crack. This is the game for brainy sleuths. Expansion kits available. Any number of players from one upwards. £19.95.

Dragonlance (TSR)

Naff game about flying dragons. Nice components though, but it owes its success to the book tie-in rather than to any intrinsic merit. (Reviewed in #2) £19.95.

**

Elixir (Three Wishes)

Good family game for wizard detectives seeking to discover the magic potion. Suitable for ages 8 and up. 2-4 players. £12.95.

Enchanted Forest (Ravensburger)

Typically tricky memory game from Alex Randolph. German 'Game of the Year' in '82. £7.99.



The Eye Game (San Serif)

A story of greed, fraud and corruption. If only the game were as interesting. £19.95.

*

Family Business (Spielfreaks)

Unavailable for many years this classic card game has just been republished in a splendid new edition. 2-6 players. (Reviewed in issue #3) £9.95.



Grass (Executive Games)

Excellent card game with dodgy theme of dope dealing. A minor classic. 2-6 players. £8.95.

Hare & Tortoise (Gibsons)

Classic race game from David Parlett based on Aesop's fable. Winner of several international awards. 2-6 players. £12.95.

CONSUMER GUIDE

Illuminati! (Steve Jackson Games)

Super card game from the guys and gals in Texas. Probably a bit too sophisticated for the average family, though. 2-6 players. £12.95.

I Think You Think I Think (TSR)

If you are going to buy a so called 'ice-breaker' game, this is the best. (Reviewed in issue #3) £17.95.

Junta (West End Games)

Outstanding party game in which players attempt to become president of a fictional banana republic and make deposits in their Swiss bank account. Highly recommended but allow some time to study the rules. 3-7 players. £12.95.



Kremlin (Avalon Hill)

Satirical game of purging and denunciations in the Soviet politburo. Lots of room for strategy and player interaction. Highly recommended. 4-6 players. (Reviewed in issue #1) £17.95.

Labyrinth (Ravensburger)

Nicely put-together maze game. Primarily aimed at children, but challenging for adults too. 2-4 players. £9.95.

Nuclear War (Flying Buffalo)

Bad taste card game in which entire populations can be wiped out. There's even an

expansion kit. 2-8 players. £10.95.

Orient Express (Robenau)

Pullman class deduction game. Winner of several awards on the continent. 2-6 players. £19.95.

Poleconomy (Spears)

Now repackaged and with a few rule changes which make for a better game. 2-6 players. (Reviewed in issue #3) £18.95.



Rollout (Supremacy)

Heavyweight financial game which can be hard going, but is well worth it. 2-6 players. £25.95.

Railway Rivals (Rostherne Games and Games Workshop)

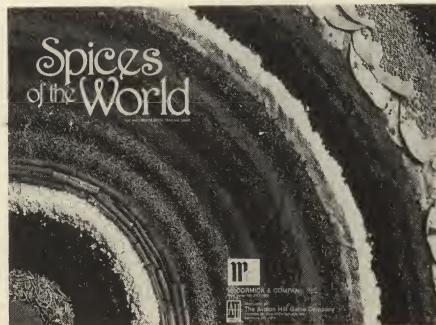
Classic railway game for all the family. Available in either a tube, or boxed. Whichever you choose you can't lose. 2-6 players. £6.95 (tube) £12.95 (boxed).

Scotland Yard (Ravensburger)

One of the rare cases of cream rising to the top. Sales of this unique deduction game have now passed the million mark. Quite right too, for this is more than a fair cop. 2-6 players. £12.99.

Shark (Flying Turtle)

Semi-abstract stock market game from Belgium which provides a neat combina-



tion of luck and skill. 2-6 players. £15.95.

Spices of the World (Avalon Hill)

Disappointing trading game that was made as a promo vehicle for a spice company. Nice recipe book though. £19.95.

**

Ubi (San serif)

Dire trivia game full of mumbo jumbo from the makers of *Trivial Pursuit*. Died a death at the box office and deservedly so. (Reviewed issue #3) £29.95.

*

Wildlife Adventure (Ravensburger)

Outstanding game that really does appeal to all the family. Beautifully made with lots of strategy as players launch expeditions to locate exotic animals. Recently deleted so grab it while you can. Highly recommended. 2-6 players. *****



Win, Place and Show (Avalon Hill)

The best horse racing game ever and of which you'll never tire. A genuine classic. 2-6 players. £14.95.

Desert Island Games

The main problem with Philip Murphy, our castaway this month, was how to get him there – he'd sink an average liner. Amazingly, though, he's able to survive on only raw cabbage and a pint of poteen a day, plus, of course, a few games,

The communiqué was hand delivered to me by a band of fully equipped Imperial Stormtroopers. The wicked Emperor Walker was demanding the secret list of my ten favourites for Desert Island Games. What could I do? There would be no denying the deadly and vicious delivery boys yet His evil must be resisted. Speedily, I melded two data files before handing over the disk to the departing war machine-beings. 'Ha!' I chuckled into my fourteenth synthi-vodka of the day, 'That'll stump Him!' My 'list' now contained 12 games . . .

Sneaking in at the bottom of the pile is Avalon Hill's **Dune**. Perhaps a little long-winded, and the Bene Gesserit is certainly a difficult (and boring, in the early stages) position to play, but still a gem. The two expansion kits might add a spark for some but personally I think they lengthen and unbalance the fun. Finding four or five other fans is always a problem, but overall the game deserves its listing here.

Legs Eleven is another 'blast from the past' – Eon Products' **Darkover**. This simple, tactical land expansion game is regularly thrown into chaos by a Ghost

Wind, Fire or Psychic Battle. Those of you who've played will know what I mean; for the rest of you, an example will have to suffice. Last time I played, the participants poured glasses of water over themselves while begging for forgiveness from a complete stranger (who was unfortunate enough to be visiting the house at that time). Silly? Undoubtedly. A kiddies game? No way. You'd have to play to understand . . .

Maggie's Den is **Kingmaker**, currently in print from Avalon Hill and TM Games. Despite some glaring historical blunders, this must be the definitive multi-player War of the Roses game. Like **Dune**, it suffers from being a little too long and hated by a significant number of people, but I find it eminently playable and enjoyable. After a few games with the same people, you seem to find that the Nobles (the basic playing 'piece' in the game) tend to take on their own personalities too!

Finding its spot at number nine is West End's **Junta**. This is a real macho game of bluff, low cunning, double dealing and revenge set in the imaginary Republic de los Bananas. The diplomatic side is beautifully mixed with a short and infrequent multi-player war game (the coups). The trick is to keep all the other players sweet and plead poverty while lining your own pockets. If your bribes and threats eventually fail you, you can always start shelling the Presidential Palace and start yet another coup d'état.

One fat lady is **Armchair Cricket** (from Norfolk House Enterprises). My mother was a fanatical whist player so her influences tend to bias me towards good card games. This is the most enjoyable cricket game I've come across but don't let the theme put you off if you're a lager lout Philistine – non cricket freaks seem to love the game too! And a good whist player will make his mark very quickly.

Schoko & Co (Schmidt Spiele) is one of the new wave of German games flooding our arid land. I'm not sure that it's generally available yet, which is a real shame because, as Alan Moonie said in his Desert Island Games in GI #2, it is simply the best business game ever. One employs salesmen, bookkeepers, secretaries and factory floor workers while signing contracts to deliver chocolate to retailers. All you have to do is buy in raw cocoa, turn it into chocolate for delivery and make sure you have enough back room employees to process the contracts. Sounds easy, eh? Well it's not, and that's why it gets my nod at number seven.

6-Tage Rennen (or **Six Day Race** for those of you who prefer to translate everything) is produced by Holtmann VIP, a cycling company. Obviously its theme is cycle racing and since it has been getting such great press in this fine organ since issue #1, I'm not going to bore you with any more. It's groovy, man.

Making it three in a row for the Germans is **Die Macher** (Hans im Glück) at number five. Emperor Walker listed this as his number one last time and I can quite understand why. It's certainly the best election game I've played, simulating the West German federal polls admirably. Although appearing complex at first, **Die Macher** is simple to play but difficult to master. I think its appeal lies in the subtlety of the play system as even your most minor of errors eventually comes back to haunt you.

Acquire could be termed a 'classic' since it's been around for years. Although I only discovered it recently and thus am influenced by the 'novelty factor', I think it'll always appear on my list of favourites. Nominally about building hotel chains, it's a contest that provides the winner's crown to the player using the best combination of short term money

making tactics and long term investment strategy. A must for those into stocks and shares games.

We drift into the top three with Avalon Hill's **Kremlin**. Yes, before you ask, I do have a copy of the original Swiss version but reckon that, despite all the gasps of horror on release, Avalon Hill have managed to improve this tongue-in-cheek look at Politburo intrigue in Moscow. Along with **Darkover** and **Junta**, this little beaut has the ability to make me laugh – rare talent these days. 'Roll up, roll up! See your favourite party members shot! See them go from a nice desk job in the Kremlin to the salt mines in Siberia! Watch the old cronies have a couple of cardiac arrests before finding their final resting places under the Kremlin Walls! Roll up, roll up!'

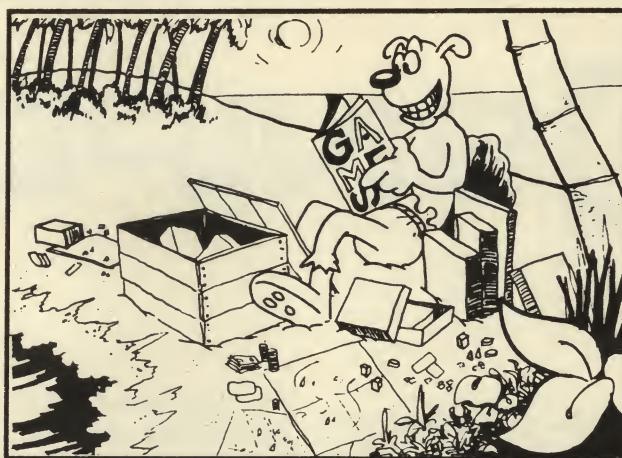
The number two spot is filled by a game that might surprise you, given the list so far; Avalon Hill/Chaosium's **RuneQuest**. Actually, I'm a fan of the fantasy world of Glorantha rather than the system itself. Penned principally by Greg Stafford, Gloranthan history and myth are not only voluminous but also scientifically logical and terminally fascinating. The background support for campaigns set in Glorantha has recently started to flow

again and the quality and quantity of the material puts all other rolegame companies to shame. I've never heard of anyone who dislikes **RuneQuest** (bar those who dislike *all* fantasy role-playing games) and I believe that's because it is, quite simply, la crème de la crème.

The best game ever produced, in my humble opinion, was Gametime Games' **Quest**. I say 'was' because this cracker is sadly out of print now. It is to King Arthur games what *Excalibur* is to King Arthur films – the definitive yardstick against which all others must be measured. I'll go no further here since Emperor Walker has already demanded that I give **Quest** the full treatment in an R.I.P article in the

near future. If you ever get the chance to partake of this little gem's delights, do so – you'll not regret it!

You're probably wondering what information was lost in the corruption of the files at the start of this article. Just missing out are **Karriere (Career)** **Poker**, **Nuclear War/Escalation**, **Spanish Main**, **Energie Poker**, **McMulti** and **Enemy in Sight**. On my desert island, I'd still continue to play **Diplomacy** and **United!** postally through various fanzines and if there wasn't a pub on the island, I'd have to build one. Where else can one enjoy the charms of **8-Ball Pool**, **Chess** and the odd hand of **Poker**, **Bridge** and the infinite varieties of **Whist**?



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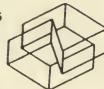
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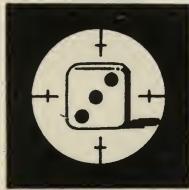
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VISITS
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Moontalk

No visit to the Eastern Seaboard is complete without a visit to the North Shore Games Club, which was founded in 1985 by our American Desk, Alan R Moon. The club's HQ is located, a shade incongruously, in the basement of a Best Western Hotel about 30 miles north of Boston. The highlight of every meeting is the astonishing range of cookies and dips provided by the member's wives. Despite this, there are none of the human juggernauts that so often frequent such places, indeed, apart from the founder himself, nobody seems the least bit odd. There was one guy though, who turned up with an old, and very obscure, SPI wargame, who promptly disappeared when nobody wanted to play it. Definition of an optimist, or what?

Also present on the day was MB employee and *Shogun* designer Mike Grey. Mike caused the biggest laugh of the meeting by describing *Die Macher* as 'long'. Considering it checks in at one hour under the shortest known finishing time of his own creation, this must rank as the biggest pot and kettle analogy of all time.

As to the range of games played; these must be the most eclectic of any club currently in existence, ranging from business classics like Schoko & Co, to monsters like *Sixth Fleet*. Much of this is due to the influence of Alan and his recent discovery of European games. Alan is probably best known for his articles on games like *Victory in the Pacific*, and *Flat Top*, when he was assistant editor of the *General* and part of the Avalon Hill development team. Following his departure from AH, Alan went to work for Parker Brothers in Beverly, Massachusetts and it was from here that the North Shore Games Club was launched. 'It all started with an ad I placed in the *General*', he tells me. 'We had about thirteen responses from guys in the area. Initially we used to meet in the house of a friend of mine, but we grew out of that as we gained new members.' How come

you checked into the Best Western? 'At the time, they were on their uppers, so I think they were grateful for any source of income. We pay them one year in advance, which, by the way, I think is essential for any club to do. The management changed hands about a year ago and the hotel is now doing real well. Nothing's changed though from our point of view. They seem glad to have us. We don't cause any trouble and they still get their money upfront.' Or, in the famous words of one games company president: 'Money talks, bullshit walks'. But how do you raise the funds for such a lump sum? 'Simple; we charge a membership fee once a year, rather than charging for admission each time. This way we ensure the financial security of the club. It's simply not viable to have members turning up, say, three times a year, and only paying for these visits.' The club also puts out a newsletter, which, apart from reminding absentee members of what's going on, contains a round up of industry news. Though, like the coverage of my visits, this has a somewhat cavalier attitude towards the truth.

Let us pray

According to the *Independent*, Kenner Parker Tonka, the company that gave the world *Marble Arch*, and *Casino*, are thinking of inflicting praying dolls on the great British public. Quite what we have done to deserve this I knoweth not, but doubtless all will be revealed in the hereafter. The dolls, if and when they arrive, will be known as *Showers of Special Blessings* and are able to 'kneel devoutly and put their hands together, eyes looking up to heaven.' As this is exactly the posture adopted by the staff when their weekly allowances are handed out, it seems only just that they should be the first recipients of such a gift.

French leave

News filters down from the ivory tower that our esteemed editor has been appointed the UK correspondent for the

French magazine, *Jeux et Stratégie*. Perhaps this excuses his habit of traipsing off to Paris every weekend. *Peut être*, but I have my doubts (*c'est le vérité - Ed*). Whatever the reasons, watch out for a series of plugs for this eclectic Gallic offering.

A night In Groucho's

A rare glimpse into London media mecca *Groucho's* is afforded by the press launch of *Enigma* – the game of riddles. Despite the tube strike and appalling weather the event is well attended, though no doubt this is due in some part to the efficiency of the liggers grapevine. The organisers have very sensibly ordered crates of champagne and this helps the evening along no end, as does meeting the acquaintance of a pouting hackette from the *Sun*, a wonderful newspaper I have always said, and one whose respect for the facts is only exceeded by the journal you are now reading. Suzanne, for it is she, is very confident that the cerebral nature of the game will not prove to be a deterrent to *Sun* 'readers'. As if to demonstrate this fact, she then provides a remarkable display of her talents by reeling off the answers to the riddles like a *Mastermind* contestant on amphetamines. And now, in the super soaraway spirit of the occasion, we invite you to emulate the achievement of the Wapping wonderwoman (36–24–34): study the following riddle taken from the game then send your answer to GI. The first correct entry will receive a copy of *Enigma*, valued at £30.

Liquids travel up my length

Doormat wrapped around my balls

Stiff hair spiky in the breeze

You've seen me in the tropic sand

This competition is not open to GI employees and hangers-on.





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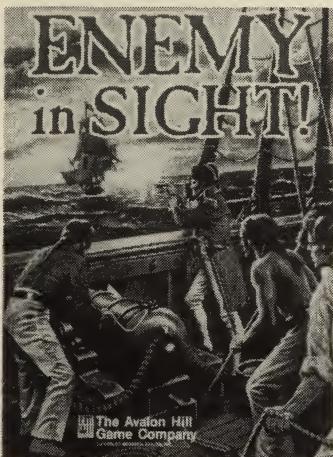
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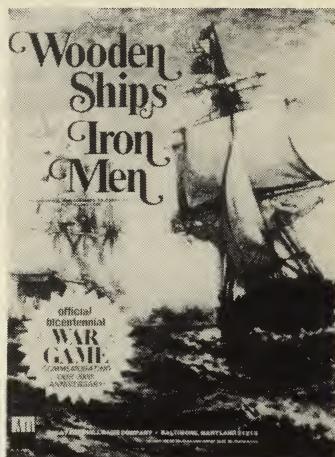
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Pole call

'Friends! All who are passionately fond of history and theory of games, mental entertainments, logic exercises, puzzles, we have a proposal: let's unite.' Thus writes the organisational committee of the World Council for the Popularisation of Games, based in the unlikely city of Warsaw. The *raison d'être* of this press release is to urge 'players of the whole world' to attend the council's first meeting in Warsaw, May 22-28. Travelling expenses are the responsibility of the participants but the organisers generously agree to take care of accommodation costs.

Despite the 17 point manifesto enclosed with the press release it's hard to discern exactly what's occurring, though new rolegames and historical simulations are promised, and, if yet another document produced by the 'Leningrad youth' is anything to go by, it should certainly be a lot of fun. We quote: 'Let's entertain relations, let's meet each other, play, think, discuss, get acquainted with all.' Our best wishes, and lots of luck comrades. For further details of this intriguing sounding event contact: Tad Urbanowicz, Grochowska 261-11, 03 844, Warszawa, Poland.

Attacktive

The good news for wargamers on a budget is that *Attacktix*, the series of wargames published by the Manchester based company, Empthill, are to be reprinted this year. Already on the shelves are *Arnhem Bridge*, *8th Army*, *Interstellar Wars* and *Fight for the Sky*, all priced at £9.95. In a licensing deal with Nova, Empthill have also published *Richthofen's War*, but as we go to press this edition has already sold out and will be reprinted this summer at a price of £12.95. August sees the release of *Battle for Normandy*, and *Victory at Waterloo*. Empthill used to be the UK distributor for the late lamented SPI company of New York, which collapsed in 1982. Empthill's MD Malcolm Watson told us that he felt the time was now ripe for a relaunch, and that in addition to the reprints, the company plan to release several new titles later this year.

ASS

ASS, the company that has a habit of living down to its unfortunate acronym, has

NEWS

gone bust. Or at least the English subsidiary of the German parent company has. Quite where this leaves *Barbarossa*, the German 'Game of the Year' 1988, which ASS (UK) had translated and printed for the English market, we know not.

Bright future

Three new releases from Games Workshop: *White Line Fever* is the first rules supplement for *Dark Future*. Published in a full colour hardback the book also doubles as a reference screen for use with the game. Apart from new rules the contents include scenarios, colour text, and black and white illustrations. RRP is £6.99.

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay is now available in a new softback format priced at £9.99, and finally from Workshop, a boxed set of Battle Titans for use with *Adeptus Titanicus* which will sell for £9.99.

Due out shortly is *Trolls in the Kitchen*, the first of a series of games aimed at the family market with a price of £5.99. Also from Workshop, yet another expansion for *Blood Bowl*. *Star Players*, which comes with 36 star player cards, should be on the shelves now.

Join the BR(G)A

Every now and again some bright spark moots the idea of a British Rolegaming Association, along the lines of the successful British Science Fiction Association. Usually the idea disappears

in a cloud of apathy but now, it seems, someone is actually doing something about it. If you think the BRGA might have something to offer you, get in touch with James Wallis, 8 College Gardens, Edmonton, London.

Out of the shadows

For a long time the only adequately supported published world in which to play *Rolemaster*, Iron Crown's detailed fantasy rolegame, was Middle-earth. While Tolkien's legacy was ably supported, it obviously doesn't exploit the possibilities of the game to the full. But soon *Rolemaster* fans will have their very own world—*Shadow World*—to explore. Advance word suggests a slight similarity to the world of Warhammer, but designer Terry K Amthor discounts this, describing *Warhammer* as 'sick and rather shallow.'

Outdoor dungeons

Avalon Hill have recently published their all time best seller list in *The General*, together with the chart for '87-'88.

The seemingly surprising position of *Outdoor Survival* can be explained by the fact that the first edition *Dungeons & Dragons* recommended buying the game simply for the mapboard.

Trumped

Two hot new releases from MB (USA) are *Trump* and *Liars Dice*. The former is a business game, and unlike many of the genre, is not simply a *Monopoly* variant. It is, of course, named after the megalomaniac business tycoon determined to be more than a footnote in history. *Liars Dice* is a variant of *Poker Dice* but with a lot of strategy and much more fun. More on these releases soon.

NEXT ISSUE

Conventions: Photo reports from Reading and Babbacombe

Formula One: Pete Birks test drives Grand Prix games

Abstractions: Eric Solomon on the latest abstract offerings

Dallas: The TV spin off that didn't make it

Plus all the usual features, news and gossip.

WARGAMES



OF THE MONTH

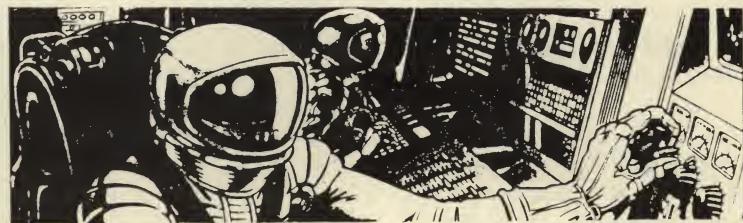
SNIPER! BUG HUNTER

DESIGNED BY
STEVE WINTER

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £5.95

Sniper! Bug Hunter is TSR's latest release in their Gamefolio series, following on the heels of Mertwig's Maze (reviewed in GI #2) and Revenge Of The Factoids. It is interesting to note that for this bright new format they have chosen to revamp a wargame first issued by SPI in 1973-4.



Sniper! Bug Hunter is an SF skirmish game, and it is clear from the front cover of the folio exactly what kind of SF atmosphere is involved. The artist, Keith Parkinson, has produced a lovely painting of the alien from *Alien*, dressed up just enough to avoid a lawsuit from 20th Century Fox. For those who remember **Sniper!** as a skirmish wargame set firmly in the Second World War, this may come as something of a shock.

The package contains a lot. You get three rule books, eight colour map sheets, four hundred die-cut counters, fifty cards, a sheet of cut-outtable bits and bobs, an activation track/roster form sheet and of course the gamefolio itself which doubles as a reference sheet. That's a great deal of game by any standards, and for six pounds offers incredible value. It is inevitable that to achieve such a price, corners were cut. Thankfully, they are the right corners.

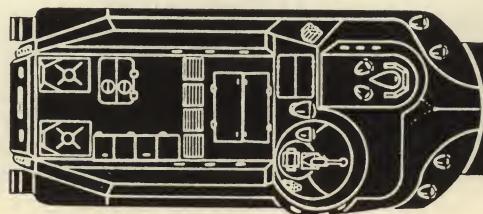
The three rule books are the original **Sniper!** rules, the adaptations required for an SF game and a book of scenarios; but this means you effectively get a free Second World War skirmish system. The eight map sheets turn out to be four map sheets twice, but they are double-sided and geomorphic, and so can be fitted together in endless different ways. As with previous TSR releases of this type

you get only one ziplock bag, but it's big enough for all 400 counters.

The **Sniper!** rules are designed to be generic and usable (with a few modifications) for any modern combat involving infantry and light armour. Although it was originally only designed for use up to the 'near future', it lends itself rather well to the type of combat required in **Bug Hunter**. The system works on the idea that each soldier is much more than the weapon he carries; and thus focuses on the him as an individual unit with unique abilities. It uses a sophisticated system which allows for units with high initiative either to act first or react to opponents' moves, and a relatively realistic firing system.

Hand-to-hand combat is introduced in the intermediate rules and is simple and direct. Vehicles appear in the advanced rules and act very much like movable terrain. The rules are written in a clear style that explains everything while not being patronising or dull, and I was surprised to find how much I remembered after just one reading.

The second book gives the SF background, including the relevant weaponry, decompression rules and descriptions of the aliens, referred to as 'predators'. There are two types of predator: swarms



and individuals (read: face huggers and big nasties). The twist comes when you discover that not only do the aliens' special powers differ from alien to alien, but it is also possible that the humans' weapons may not work against some of them. Imagine the shock of discovering that all your plasma gun does is to enrage the things! This may seem a little unbalanced, but it must be remembered that even though they are faster than the humans, most predators have no missile combat abilities, which evens things out. It also gives the game a variety which would be missing from a straightforward military simulation or skirmish.

This atmosphere is further enhanced by the use of dummy counters used by the predator player, so that the human player is never quite sure where the nasties are until they actually spring out and attack. There was no way a game using a rules system designed for skirmish wargames could hope to capture the claustrophobic

and paranoid feel of the *Alien* films, but this gets close enough.

The scenario book is the shortest of the three at a mere eight pages. It includes eight scenarios, one of them designed for solo play, a history of the Frontier Tactical Service and a page of designer's notes. The scenarios are not particularly sophisticated, but do include the game's own versions of *Alien* and *Aliens*; the former features a predator variant of the 'Sergeant Rockanroll' super soldier introduced in the basic rule book; and the wonderful 'It Came From Outer Space' which combines **Bug Hunter** with the previous **Sniper!** games, **Hetzer** and **Special Forces**. Players will no doubt want to create their own variants.

Sniper! Bug Hunter is not without a few rough spots but these can easily be smoothed over. More importantly, it is produced in a style which will attract both wargamers and fantasy/SF gamers, and

because of its accessibility may well lead to each type becoming interested in the other field. It is clearly laid out, well explained, and with no significant inconsistencies between the original tried and proven **Sniper!** rules and the SF variant. The game itself is fast, fun and contains enough variables to keep players interested for some time. It can be expanded either by the players designing their own scenarios, or by the purchase of the earlier sets of rules. To get all this in a package costing just under six pounds is very impressive indeed, even if there still isn't any convenient way of storing it.

TSR have so far struck gold with two out of three of their gamefolio packages. If they can continue this standard, I for one will keep buying. What are you waiting for? Go and buy it!

James Wallis

when I emptied out the contents I was not exactly bowled over.

Out popped a 16" x 24" map (paper and plasticised) with a couple of sheets of printed text and a plastic bag of coloured wooden pawns and dice. Whatever this was, it was not a detailed simulation. Unashamed, I set things up and played.

The map, on a scale of 25 kilometres per hex, runs from the French border across Spain to Portugal. The 15 major cities are coloured red and the other set up cities/fortresses are in a darker colour that is supposed to be purple (but isn't) and is not distinct enough from the red for my aging eyes. Play this game in good lighting conditions!

The French player starts with 20 units (blue coloured pawns) and the Allies with 24 (10 Brits, 10 Spaniards and 4 Portuguese, coloured red, yellow and green respectively). With these they compete for control of the red cities.

The French must occupy a city to obtain control, whereas an empty city is under Allied control. Victory is determined after a set time (set beforehand by the players) allowing a reasonably accurate assessment of how long the game will take. I found this a bit of a cheat – particularly as the cover says 90 minutes and the rules say two hours! My experience sug-

gests that two hours is a better limit to start off with. At the end of the time the allies get three more turns and victory is adjudged; whoever controls eight or more of the red cities wins. During the game, any time a player controls 12 and keeps possession during his opponent's turn, he wins.

The rules of movement are straightforward. Each side gets a set allowance and uses it for that army, subject to a maximum limit for one piece and quirks for the Allied player to reflect the multinational and uncooperative nature of his forces. Thus, the French player gets 12 movement points, allowing 12 armies to move one apiece or two armies to move six apiece. The pieces fit, just, into a hex grid. There is no stacking. Costs vary according to terrain, although I have yet to satisfy myself what (in game terms) 'crossing a narrow estuary' means, as there is no terrain chart! Fortunately it is easy to spot the hills, but this a little more attention should have been paid to such basics.

Combat is resolved by the roll of two dice as follows: 11 or 12 eliminates the defender. 9 or 10 retreats the defender. 5 to 8 has no effect. 2 to 4 attacker loses one piece. The attacker may roll one attack for every attacking piece unless the defender is in 'a good defensive position' such as city, hill or separated by river. In these cir-

**THE
PENINSULAR
WAR
1808-1814**

**DESIGNED BY
DAVID WATTS**

**PUBLISHED BY
ROSTHERNE GAMES**

PRICE £7.95

**

This game comes packaged in a 20" cardboard tube wrapped with a cover featuring line drawings of Boney, Wellington and some of the soldiers of the Peninsular era. The blurb describes it as 'a strategic game of skill for 2 players based on the campaigns of the allied armies... against the French invaders.' It's intended for two players aged 11 to adult and states a duration of 90 minutes. I wasn't quite sure what to expect (six years of warfare in 90 minutes?) and

cumstances the attacker rolls one less attack. In multiple attacks the last result is used (ignoring all previous rolls) with the attacker deciding when to stop.

Let us say three French armies are attacking a British piece at Valencia. The French player can roll three attacks, less one for the city, equals two. The first roll is a 5 (no effect) which is no use. The French player decides to go for it, rolls an 11 and celebrates as he removes the defender. Had his second roll been a 2 he would have been less happy! He would have been perfectly entitled to stop after the first roll, had he wanted.

The combat system has other minor details to reflect the nationality problems of the Allies. There are rules for ship movement (Brits only), sieges and reinforcements. Ship movement is simple and essential for the Allied player who must spend valuable turns importing the British Army to prevent a French walkover.

The siege rules could have done with an extra line to amplify their intent. I think they mean that after three turns of being surrounded completely, an enemy unit is wiped out. Reference to the siege being lifted presumably means that the unit is no longer surrounded. What if two pieces are surrounded? Since not all adjacent land hexes are occupied by the enemy this cannot be a siege. Or can it? All right, I'm being picky; but rules writers should pay more attention to their audience, particularly in a product aimed (presumably) at the novice market.

The reinforcements, which arise from capturing previously enemy held red (victory) cities, are essential. Since you may only recruit from the original enemy held red cities and the French start with five and the Allies 10, the Allies have limited help available since they can only recruit five. This makes the shipping in of the Brits as important as it should be. Allied losses are tough, limiting offensive action until superiority in depth can be mustered.

There are two schools of thought about this game. With my boardgaming colleagues **Peninsular War** was a disaster. We disliked (in particular) the lack of a realistic turn equivalent, the simplistic combat, the lack of leadership effects, the lack of command or control effects other than the movement point restrictions, the lack of differentiation in the pieces apart from the combat quirks, the lack of

chrome or flavour generally. None of the boardgamers, I regret, could be persuaded to play it twice.

Mr Watts would doubtless allege that the review has been based upon the wrong audience. To anticipate that I tried to find less blinkered individuals without hinting at my own views on the merits of **Peninsular War**.

With friends (and family) not of the regular boardgaming crowd it was a hit! '**Risk in Spain**' was how one put it. I don't think that does justice to the intent, but I know what he means. It was a compliment.

This audience liked the simple rules (which I explained rather than leave them at the mercy of the rule book), the coloured wooden pawns, the short historical notes and the ease of play. They were less keen on the turns crawling as they do when the Allied player spends time shipping in his reinforcements. They had little problem with the victory conditions, but found it tough to grasp who controlled what until I put together my own city control display chart.

In this circle **Peninsular War** was a success. Not only did they enjoy it, but since most had never played such a creature, they were enticed by the prospect of more of these games on different topics. To them, **Peninsular War** was a great introduction. Since the strategies are not as easy as the aforementioned **Risk** it was not uncommon for them to want a second crack after their first bungling efforts.

Therefore, **Peninsular War** will be more likely to appeal to the gamer who has less experience of the 'real thing'. The disappointing view, however, is that with a smidgen more development this could have been more successful in both arenas.

What is worth pointing out is that in all the play sessions no two games were the same; this may sound like a contradiction, but there are a good number of play options that the different groups tried out. None seemed obviously superior so I shall leave you to make your own mistakes! Among the novice testers this feature was the most attractive element that made them think of trying again – to see if there was a 'better' solution.

I think it is worth narrating the criticisms from the hard core gamers, which can be broken down into four areas of discontent: the map, the rules, the aids and the overall impression.

Map

The victory cities should stand out more. The movement costs could have been displayed here, for ease. Also, the combat summary which is printed on the map gives the wrong retreat distance! The hex grid numbering is beyond my comprehension; not every hex is coded, but how hex Z22 ends up next to A57 is a total mystery! Since recognised hex numbering conventions exist the unusual numbering used here is strange, unhelpful and unnecessarily confusing.

Rules

Fitting the rules into one and a half sides of A4 paper is worthwhile if everything is crystal clear. Unfortunately this is not the case. I had to read very carefully to establish the order of play! The omission of a game turn sequence is inexcusable. It is almost all there, but I had to work hard to compile everything – harder than should be necessary for a game of this level. The lack of illustrations and limited number of examples is unhelpful.

Aids

Since city control is so vital, a record of who controls what is needed. The paper slip provided either needs to be copied (and more than one might be needed per game) or a separate DIY version might do the trick. This looks too much like an afterthought that spoils the enjoyment.

Impression

Bland. This is not a game about the **Peninsular War**; it's a game that takes place on a map of the Peninsular War. The lack of character or feel for the real conflict makes this a non starter as a simulation. As a challenge, however, it is reasonably well balanced.

In short, as a game it can be a reasonable face to face encounter. As a competitive product in today's market it has little to raise it above the mire. A near miss for the hard core market, who would welcome a quick and easy to play wargame. For the less complex gamer or the novice it is likely to be very welcome entertainment. *Chacun à son goût.*

Ellis Simpson

THE LAST HURRAH

DESIGNED BY
REX MARTIN & JOHN
MARTUZAS

PUBLISHED BY
AVALON HILL

PRICE £15.95

The vast appetite that Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) buffs have for new scenarios is amply illustrated by the newest release, **The Last Hurrah**, module number six. Few games attract enough of a following to make a module based entirely on the Allied minor nations of the Second World War even a possibility; with ASL it is not only thought of, it's fashioned, honed and produced to the highest industry standards with more care and attention than many competitors. **The Last Hurrah** is, if nothing else, an exquisite (if modest) addition to the ASL universe.

On opening the slim flat box, adorned with cover art inspired by the first scenario, you will find: a single counter sheet, two maps and eight scenarios.

The counter sheet consists of 260 half inch counters in the ASL silhouette style representing the Allied minor nations infantry. The colour used is an inoffensive green and the troops include the usual mix of squads, half squads and crew of varying quality together with leaders, small arms and concealment counters. As players of the German side in the scenarios will come to learn, these infantry are no pushovers. The leader counters include the usual familiar reference to the playtesters and the best of all, Major Oleson (a 10-3) although not a playtester is clearly an acknowledgement for one of the grand old gamers and Anzio fanatic, Tom Oleson.

The map boards are hard backed geomorphic, being numbered 11 and 33. 11 is a reworking, with a couple of hills and plenty of hedges, stone walls and other cover. 33 is a much more open affair, a huge grain field with a pleasant orchard and farm complex in the middle destined

to mark the final resting place of some cardboard warriors. Both maps are well up to what ASL players expect.

The scenarios come on both sides of four A4 cards. Even non ASL players will be familiar with the style of these; they include a military sketch, historical introduction, set-up data, victory conditions, suggestions for play balance and a note of what actually occurred. These cards set the scene.

The eight scenarios are fairly restrained affairs concentrating on the early years; don't look in this box for the Polish paras at Arnhem or the Free French on the road to Paris. To play the scenarios you will need **Beyond Valour** and **Yanks** (the latter for two of the scenarios).

The first scenario (number 43) is built around the charge of the Polish 18th Uhlan Cavalry against a German infantry regiment backed up by Panzer IIs and armoured cars from the Divisional Recon Patrol in September 1939. The cavalry were trying to release their exhausted colleagues from the 9th Infantry Division. The scenario is an opportunity to use the horse counters with a vengeance! Thirteen lovely squads of cavalry doing battle with a foe that has too many machine guns for my liking!

Number 44 is a step forward to April 1940 in Norway. The Germans are on the attack with Fallschirmjäger elite troops against some rag tag citizen volunteers who stand in the way of an attempt to capture King Haakon.

Scenario 45 is a unique snapshot view of the campaign in Crete. The 1st Greek Regiment has to accumulate greater than 20 casualty points against recently landed elements of an elite Sturm Regiment. It's a tough mission for the Greeks; the Germans start concealed and simply have to stay out of trouble or set a decent ambush or two to avoid defeat.

The historical notes mention the possible side effects of the battle: after this clash at Kastelli the Germans took to terrorising the local populace and began atrocities that ruled out any possibility of befriending the Cretans. Some historians claim that the side show of the Greek campaign gave the Russians a better chance to survive the Nazi invasion because it meant that Barbarossa was started behind schedule and the winter came to the rescue that bit earlier. Since this 'side show' is generally regarded as



a British failure, too, it's not exactly an auspicious campaign to feature. A brave choice and a good view of one of the lesser known fields of Second World War combat.

Scenario 46 goes back to Belgium in May 1940 and features the bridges across the Albert Canal. Stukas versus some plucky Carabiniers. Not my favourite scenario – I dislike the clumsy aircraft rules – but it is worth playing as it is a nail biting fight for a valuable piece of real estate, ably simulated.

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The Yugoslavian forces in scenario 47 (April 1941) are caught unprepared by the blitzkrieg of a German motorised column. Be warned, the Yugoslavs will melt before your very eyes, although the availability of some cavalry can cause the German attacker concern.

The Belgians get another crack in scenario 48 in trying to hold off SS Regiment Deutschland. For complete atmospheric input the German player can interrogate the local civilian population to avoid walking into the hidden positions of the Ardennes defenders! This is a good scenario (along with the Paratrooper ones) for learning ASL. The more experienced player should take the Germans (as he has the burden of attack) but as well as having to control all the hexes for victory he should remove one of the machine guns. I found that to be more of an even task between myself and someone learning the ASL ropes.

My favourite of the lot – scenario 49 – features the army of the Netherlands.

Again it is the German on the attack as he strives to wrest control of some pillboxes with a rearward assault. A small and manageable scenario that is easily finished off in an evening.

Last up, number 50, is a change of direction with the poor Poles having to attempt a breakout against the Russians closing their escape routes. Polish cavalry, wagons and infantry versus Soviet infantry and armoured cars. Quite a mix!

And that's your lot: a spread of scenarios with plenty on offer for the ASL enthusiast. The only criticism is that at £15.95 it's damn expensive; not so much in play value (in pence per game ASL is cheap) but more by comparison with the dollar price. Nevertheless, a welcome module for ASL and one which proves Avalon Hill's dedication to the completion of the project. Meantime, I'm off to practise my rally die rolls!

Ellis Simpson

RED STORM RISING

DESIGNED BY
DOUGLAS NILES

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £14.95

This game is based on the book of the same name by Tom Clancy. If you haven't read it, do so. It is like reading 500 pages of a wargame replay, and certainly the best military book ever written. While the game does not rise up to the same level, which would almost be asking the impossible anyway, it is probably the best wargame TSR has ever done.

The first thing that grabs you is the components: a large, solid game board; four counter sheets; lots of plastic stands; four high quality 10-sided dice; a large Air Board chart; and two rule books. Not

quite the same impact as you get from all the plastic pieces in MB's Gamemaster Series, but close enough and a large step up from paper maps and 1/2" counters.

The board covers an area from East Germany and Czechoslovakia in the east to the Netherlands and France in the west, and from the North Sea to Munich. The map is divided into areas instead of hexes. Terrain is limited to woods, mountains, and major and minor rivers. There are also 24 cities.

The land unit counters measure 1" x 3/4" when folded and mounted in the plastic stands. They are placed face towards the owning player. The backs of the counters facing the opponent are all the same, thus creating limited unit intelligence. A unit's strength is only revealed when it attacks, or when it is successfully attacked. There are only two types of land units; armour and infantry. Unit strengths (attack ratings) range from two to five.

The short game is four turns long and takes about one-and-a-half hours. The long game is 9–11 turns but only takes three hours because the number of units in play constantly decreases throughout the game. The rule book estimates the playing time of the long game as three hours, but since I am a fast player, this seems to be an underestimate.

VIRGIN TOP TEN WARGAMES

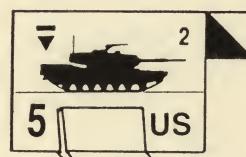
MARCH 1989

1. Battletech (FASA)
2. The Last Hurrah (Avalon Hill)
3. Imperium Romanum (West End)
4. Red Storm Rising (TSR)
5. Air Superiority (GDW)
6. Star Strike (ICE)
7. War & Peace (Avalon Hill)
8. Harpoon (GDW)
9. Centurian (FASA)
10. Tac-Air (Avalon Hill)

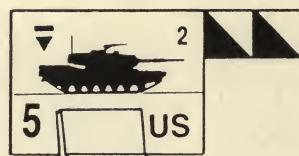
One rule book covers the basic game, the other the advanced game and optional rules. In the basic game, the sequence of play is:

- 1 Warsaw Pact units attack
- 2 Warsaw Pact units move
- 3 Nato units move
- 4 Nato units attack

MARKING HITS



Piece has suffered one Hit



Piece has suffered two Hits

5 Both sides receive reinforcements.

One of the optional rules allows players to choose each turn whether they want to move then attack or attack then move. I suggest you always use this rule. It doesn't change the balance, but it does make things more interesting for both layers. Without it, many times the Nato player's last turn is meaningless since he must move before attacking and it will be nearly impossible for him to recapture cities.

Each unit can normally move one or two spaces. However, if a unit is not adjacent to an enemy unit during, at the beginning, or at the end of its move, it can move up to four spaces. Terrain has no effect on movement in the basic game, but in the advanced game crossing a river counts as two spaces. Only two units are allowed in any one area, and the owning player must align them so one unit is in the front and one in the back.

Combat is always voluntary. If there are two units in an area, only the front one can attack. The only way the back unit can attack is if it is an armour unit and the attack of the front unit causes the attacked area to be vacated. The armour unit at the back can then break through by moving into the vacated area and attack from there itself. If there are two enemy units in an area, the front unit must always be attacked first. If it is eliminated or retreated, the back unit can then be attacked.

An attack succeeds if you roll equal to or less than the attack rating of the attacking unit. If the number is equal to the attack rating, the enemy piece is retreated. If the number is less than the attack rating, the enemy piece takes a hit and is retreated.

If a one is rolled, the enemy piece is eliminated is the attack rating of the attacking piece is equal to or greater than the attack rating of the enemy piece.

Units with an attack rating of two only take one hit. Units with an attack rating of three take two hits. Units with an attack rating of four or five take three hits. Hits are marked by sliding a damage flag into the unit, which turns out to be a clean and effective system, especially when compared to a system such as placing strength markers under counters that lay flat on the board.

Terrain has no effect on combat in the basic game. In the advanced game, a unit attacking into forest, rough, or cities has its attack rating reduced.

In the short game, the Warsaw Pact player wins by capturing five Nato cities; otherwise the Nato player wins. In the long game, a die is thrown at the end of turns nine and ten to see if the game ends then, and if not it ends automatically after turn 11. The player with the most cities wins. In both versions, bonus cities count as two cities if captured by the opponent. There are five Nato bonus cities (Amsterdam, Arnhem and three others west of the Rhine). All four Warsaw Pact cities are bonus cities.

The advanced game adds in the air units. Unless you're a novice wargamer you should use the air units right from the start because the elegantly simple air system is the best part of the game.

Air units have attack ratings from two to five, but come in three different colours. A yellow attack rating means the unit is best against enemy air units. A green at-

tack rating means the unit is best against enemy land units. A black attack rating means the unit can perform both effectively, but neither as well as the more specialised units. Helicopters are part of both side's forces, as are special AWAC units.

The Air Board is divided in half, into northern and southern sectors. At the start of each turn, players assign their air units to the sectors. The rule book describes a step-by-step procedure for this, but it is much easier just to put up a screen in the middle of the Air Board and have both players place all their units simultaneously.

All units assigned to air superiority missions then perform one round of air-to-air combat. After combat has been resolved, if both sides still have units in the sector, air superiority is contested. If only one side has units, he has gained air superiority.

All units assigned to tactical missions are moved to the board during the owning player's turn. First, each unit must roll on the Airstrike Loss Table, the table determined by the air superiority status in the sector: friendly, enemy or contested. If the unit is not eliminated or aborted, it can perform a ground attack.

While both sides begin the game with over 30 air units and receive more as reinforcements, attrition is usually heavy. After the first couple of turns, the air forces will be only shells of their former selves. This is one reason the long game doesn't take two or three times as long as the short game. Attrition of land units is not nearly as heavy, but there are always fewer total units each turn.

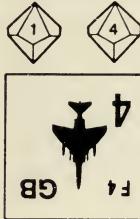
That's the basic system. There's lots of chrome in the form of other rules in the advanced game and the optional rules. Each player has assets which can be assigned to units to increase units' attack ratings or negate the effects of rivers. There are breakdown units which can be substituted for a full strength unit with an attack rating of four or five, and both sides have paratroop units. Use them if you must. Each slows the game down some and adds little in return.

Both the short and long games are finely balanced. Both players will feel they still have a chance during the last turn of most games. Many games will come down to the last few die rolls. There isn't any wide-open movement in the short game

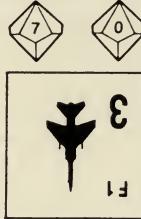
Damaged and Aborted; Aborted



Destroyed



Unscathed



Damaged and Aborted



Destroyed



Unscathed

as players fight it out over a two to four area wide corridor near the border between East and West Germany. I usually don't like games with static situations, but there is so much going on within the limited area of play that the impression of far more movement is created. In the long game, things open up quite a bit in the later turns, as both players have fewer units to form a cohesive line across the board.

There are lots of die rolls each turn and I found it hard to keep track of whether I was being lucky or not, so overall I'd have to say the luck factor is minimal. There's lots of room here for different strategies, too. The only serious restriction is the set-up which limits the players' options somewhat, particularly those of the Warsaw Pact player, since units must be set up within the areas assigned to their nationality or army. Players should consider discarding this and experimenting with a totally free set-up. No matter what set-up a player uses, he will still have weak areas as well as strong ones.

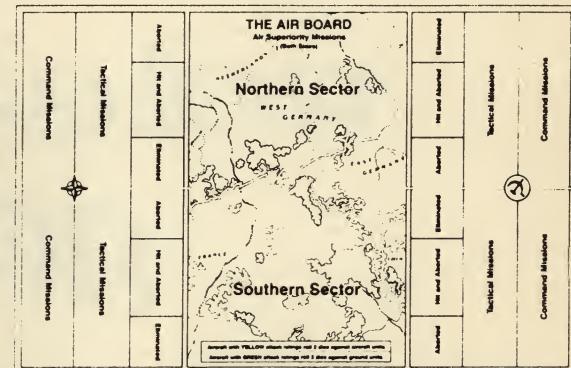
This is a game of attrition as much as anything else, both for the players and their units. Players must pay constant attention and strive to use their strength of the moment, ever changing from turn to turn, from unit to unit, from situation to situation, to their best advantage. Like most good wargames, the knack is knowing when to retreat to a better defensive position, when to counterattack, when to change the emphasis on a front from an all out push to a feint, where to bring in reinforcements, when to sacrifice a unit to hold up the enemy advance, when to gamble against the odds and so on. In short, if you're a gamer, all those things you instinctively take into consideration without consciously thinking about them.

The hidden intelligence system is just right. It adds the fog of war without being too much of a factor. You can keep track of the strengths of some enemy units if you make the effort, and this can be important when you are trying to break open a hole in the line. Most of the time, though, it doesn't make that much difference, and which enemy units you attack will more often depend on the dispositions of your own units and your overall strategy.

One of the criteria for all good games is the flexibility of the game system. Here, there are lots of rules that can be added and lots of others that can be dispensed with without hurting the game system.

Don't be misled by this either. When players start making up their own rules and ignoring others, it is not a sign of a game with a poor rule book. It is the sign of a good game: a game which allows the players to create their own unique and special version, and inspires them to take the time to do so.

Many wargamers used to turn up their noses when TSR was mentioned. Then TSR bought SPI and *Strategy & Tactics*. But TSR SPI games just weren't the same somehow. Now the SPI line has almost petered out. What has sprung up in its stead is a line of TSR games with much more promise. TSR is now doing things their own way instead of trying to sustain a legacy. *Onslaught* was the first sign of their emergence. *Buck Rogers* and *Red Storm Rising* are the next steps. I, for one, can't wait to see what they do next. I'm hoping they are going to continue to do games like *Red Storm Rising* and pick up the Gamemaster Series ball in the other hand and run with it at the same time.



Before I forget, I should also tell you that *Red Storm Rising* has rules to combine it and *The Hunt For Red October*, its sister game. And despite the negative review of my good pal, Mike Siggins (in GI #1), I am definitely going to go back and give *The Hunt For Red October* a try. Mike, nicknamed Sumo, was probably upset that there were no rules for submarine belly bumping.

Alan R Moon

Red Storm Rising will be the subject of next issue's Strategy Seminar.

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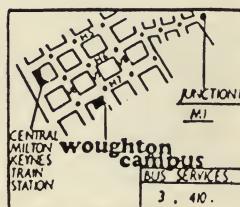
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**ADVANCED
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2ND EDITION
PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

DESIGNED BY
DAVID 'ZEB' COOK

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £11.95

**

When Advanced Dungeons & Dragons was first published, the Monster Manual was the first book to appear, followed by the Players' Handbook and finally the crucial volume, the Dungeon Master's Guide. This time TSR have got the order right, because the all-new Player's Handbook is clearly the central rulebook of the new system. Can AD&D2 stand the test of time as well as its predecessor?

First impressions of the book are good. It is a hardback with 256 pages, a full contents list and an index. The page layout is clean if cramped, tables are numbered, optional rules are clearly indicated and there is a heading at the top of each page. There is little interior artwork, and much of it is fairly terrible. Somehow it feels more like a textbook than a rulebook.

As TSR had promised, AD&D2 is almost totally compatible with the existing AD&D rules, but seems to be more complex than the first edition. The original Player's Handbook is exactly half as long as the second edition. The extra length is taken up with additions to and

longer explanations of the existing rules, and areas which were previously published in the other AD&D rulebooks.

A typical set of rolegaming rules consists of three main sections: character generation, combat and the game background. AD&D2 has been rationalised to include the combat system in the Player's Handbook so the game can be run essentially from the one book: the only notable missing area is the rules for experience points. Background is still almost wholly absent.

There is very little truly *new* material in the AD&D2 Player's Handbook. The rules have been rewritten but not redesigned. The only section to have received a really major overhaul is the magic system. Instead of being simply a Cleric, Druid, Magic User or Illusionist, characters now either use Wizard spells or Priest spells and then specialise within those headings, to define more tightly the types of magic they can use. This is simultaneously an improvement and a major drawback. Other new material includes details on lighting, climbing and falling, all of which should have been in the original rules.

A number of sections of the original rules are missing from AD&D2 without explanation. Farewell, assassins. Farewell,

monks. Farewell, half-orcs. All three were fun and it is hard to explain their absence. Farewell also, psionics. You on the other hand will not be missed. The new character classes and races introduced in Unearthed Arcana have not been written into the new system; so the range of available characters has decreased.

The combat system has been simplified. Gone are the acres of tables, to be replaced by the 'THAC0' (To Hit Armour Class 0) rating which is faster and easier to use. Small new rules abound in this area, and many appear to have been absent-mindedly tacked on. Since that was one of the problems of the original system, I am not happy to see it recurring here. Several areas in AD&D2 have been substantially changed, leading to compatibility problems with the original. Bards, for instance, are unrecognisable. More importantly numbers in tables have been altered, and while the new figures may make more sense, they do not fit with AD&D. This is the major problem with AD&D2. Like IBM computers, it had to be compatible with what has gone before or it would lose much of its potential market; and it is this that holds it back. Yet a number of the original rules which could and should have been changed are untouched, or have actually been made worse. The rules on surprise are repeated almost verbatim and rules on dying are



now much more harsh: zero hit points previously meant a character was unconscious and bleeding to death. Now they're dead. The ridiculous and archaic alignment system has actually been expanded.

AD&D2 as seen in the new Player's Handbook is an improvement over the original: in fact it is the system that **AD&D** should have been all along. There is nothing of major significance within the second edition that was not in the old system except the new magic rules and even they are fairly poor. TSR have simply rewritten the rules explanations in the same way that they rewrote **Basic D&D** in the early 1980s, while making enough

changes to the mechanics to persuade **AD&D** players that they ought to buy the new set of books.

AD&D2 is a step forward for the game, but a very small step. It is still stranded in the second generation of rolegames, trapped there by archaic mechanics and a writer who lacked the vision to see what could have been done with the material. The areas of incompatibility will lead to problems at clubs and conventions for years to come. I feel the project was doomed to failure before it even started, although much depends on your definition of 'failure'. As a game, it is still hugely over-complex and a terrible intro-

duction to rolegaming. As a product, it will make a great deal of money for TSR.

If **AD&D** is the game which you play most or all of the time, then the second edition **Player's Handbook** is probably worth buying. If you are wondering about starting role-playing, it might be worth a look. If you fall into any other field, do not bother. **AD&D** may be the biggest selling rolegame of all time but, like the IBM PC, that doesn't mean that it isn't thoroughly obsolete and to be avoided.

James Wallis

SWORDS & GLORY TEKUMEL SOURCEBOOK 2

DESIGNED BY
M A R BARKER

PUBLISHED BY
DIFFERENT WORLDS

PRICE £6.99

Tékumel was described by no lesser person than E Gary Gygax as the most beautifully done fantasy game ever created. It is one of the oldest rolegames around (original **Empire of the Petal Throne** was brought out by TSR in 1975) and yet has never received the coverage it deserves. Principally, this is due to the original edition being a **D&D** variant, and the subsequent edition, **Swords & Glory**, being largely unavailable. Tékumel is now in the hands of Different Worlds, who unaccountably decided to start their series of reprints with the original rules. **D&D** does little to enhance the appeal of a world as rich and sophisticated as Tékumel, so this can only be seen as unfortunate. Happily they are following up **Empire of the Petal Throne** with a three volume revised reprint of the **Swords & Glory** sourcebook.

The layout of these book is adequate, and the art gives a fair idea of the 'look' of Tékumel even though it's nothing to froth about.

The first **Swords & Glory** sourcebook introduced us to the world and its inhabitants, especially the Tsolyáni empire. Full details were given of history, physical ethnology, and the complex clan system that dominates the known parts of the world. The second book kicks off with coverage of religion and magic. Even though the gods of this world certainly exist, religion retains much of the mystery and fascination of Earth religion. Barker knows his stuff, as a superb article on the subject in an old issue of *Gryphon* demonstrates. The Tsolyáni believe in ten gods, each of which has a subservient demigod, or cohort. Five of the gods are considered gods of 'Stability' while the others represent 'Change'. As revealed in the source material, these concepts are far more subtle than 'Law' and 'Chaos', and unlike the latter two, make sense as part of a society's religion.

Since the world portrayed in the game lies in the far future of our own Universe, magic has quite a detailed 'pseudo-scientific' rationale. It is divided into two types: psychic and ritual, the latter being the more structured and predictable.

The rest of this sourcebook is concerned with social groups and organisations. In some rolegaming material you feel the author was straining to fill up the pages; in this book you feel that Barker has had to work hard to leave material out. Tékumel has been a part of his life for over fifty years, so it is not surprising that he has more material on it than Tolkien ever

amassed for Middle-earth. And what distinguishes Barker's creation from Tolkien is that Tékumel is a truly alien culture. It is fascinating, absorbing, and richly rewarding to adventurers, but there is always more to learn. 57 pages of material on language, social classes, commerce, law, administration and professions provide you with plenty to dip into.

There are no rules given in the book, but referees who are (understandably) loath to use the **D&D**-inspired EPT rules should easily be able to adapt their favourite rules system, after a skim through the sourcebook to see what modifications are necessary. Both **RuneQuest** and **GURPS** spring immediately to mind as systems which could be applied to Tékumel. Further reflection suggests **Rolemaster** as a possibility.

In a market full of hack fantasy and ersatz subcreation, it's reassuring to come across something which bears the stamp of true imagination.

Paul Mason



TALES FROM THE ETHER

(SPACE: 1889 SCENARIOS)

DESIGNED BY
MARC W MILLER, FRANK CHADWICK, LOREN K WISEMAN, TIM RYAN AND LESTER W SMITH

PUBLISHED BY
GDW

PRICE £3.99

**

The party find themselves undertaking a mission in some exotic location. They

crashland, and are captured by enemies, meeting up with a power-crazed villain who has hatched some diabolical plot against Life, Liberty and the British Way. They escape, foiling the dastardly scheme in the process.

If you like this kind of stuff then you'll love *Tales from the Ether*. It contains five scenarios, three of which follow the above pattern exactly, and one which simply omits the crashlanding bit, substituting a 'You Must Do This Or I Sling You In Jail' method of involving the player characters. The exotic locations are the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, and the *Harbinger* – the orbiting Heliograph used by Britain to communicate with her colonies on other worlds. The scenarios are simple affairs, but provide a neat opportunity to include background material on a number of items ranging from the planet Mercury to the sewers of Mars and the aforementioned Heliograph.

River of Life is a sequel to the adventure given in the basic book, introducing more lifeforms to a Moon which is seeming less

dead by the day. Because of the simplicity of the plots, most of the scenarios are left admirably open for player resolution; only *Ausonian Stalker*, the Martian Sewer-based adventure, comes across as a rigid plotline.

Anarchy in the Ether – the one which doesn't fit the stereotype plot – features a threatened bomb attack on the *Harbinger* by Ravachol, a French Anarchist described in the original rulebook. It revolves around one neat plot twist, and though this doesn't stand up to close examination it does make *Anarchy*, for me, the best of the bunch.

Tales from the Ether is a standing still product. It will satisfy those who were sold on the Space: 1889 concept but who lack the imagination to design their own adventures. What it doesn't do is add anything truly creative to the game, or provide much in the way of inspiration for more imaginative referees. Still, it's good value for money.

Paul Mason

CALANDIA GUIDEBOOK

DESIGNED BY
TERRY RANDALL

PUBLISHED BY
MAYFAIR GAMES

PRICE £9.95

**

The Calandia Guidebook is one of a series of products based around the City-State of the Invincible Overlord. As one of a dying breed who saved up their pennies in the late 70s to buy the original Judge's Guild edition of the City-State, I greeted the arrival of the Mayfair Games version with interest. While it is true that my tastes in gaming have changed over the last decade, I don't think I was overly unfair in feeling that 'Everything that was bad about the original edition has been retained . . . everything that was good about the original edition has been removed.'

Now here we have the *Calandia Guidebook*, providing invaluable background detail for the world outside the City-State (a world which is nothing to do with the Judge's Guild Wilderlands of High Fantasy in which the original languished). The pretty green box contains three books: the *Calandia Guidebook*, *Religion in Calandia* and a *Calandian Dictionary*.

The *Calandian Guidebook* is a collection of bits and pieces on various subjects. The section How to Use this Book (hidden away on the back page: smart move folks!) simply lists a set of rule conventions, confirming the Calandian system as a D&D clone. Most of this is unnecessary to the contents of the book, which consists of essays on politics, culture, coinage, weights and measures and the like. Anyone who owns the City-State package will know what sort of material this is: standard D&D-campaign background stuff. Anyone who doesn't own the City-State package won't find anything here of great interest. The gimmick pushed most strongly about this campaign is that it is an 'open world'. Players can use their characters from other games in it, with the convenient rationale that they fell through a nexus point. In my early days with D&D I too followed this approach, and it's certainly a fun-filled way of experiencing many different campaigns with favourite characters.

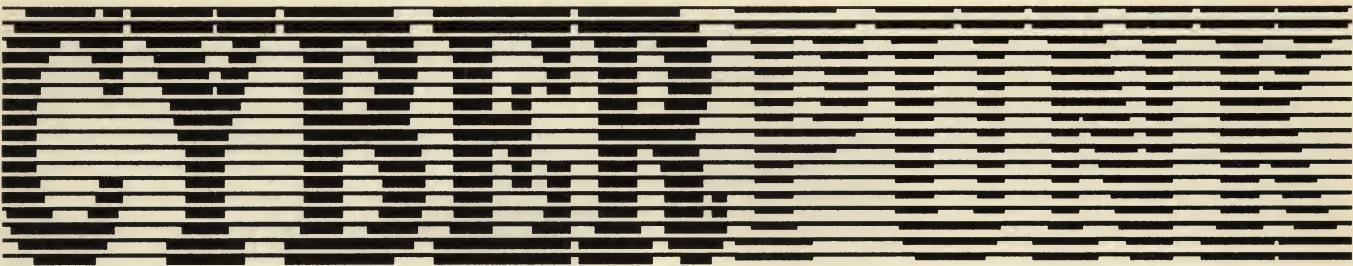
However it doesn't sit well with a developed world, which is what Calandia purports to be.

The *Religion in Calandia* book is the latest in a long line of roleplaying products which make a mockery of true religion. A set of mickey-mouse deities, some of which are superficially similar to Earth deities, have statistics given in case your high level warrior fancies a new challenge. There is nothing in this book which resembles true religion.

The *Calandian Dictionary* is far more promising. This is the kind of thing which, if done properly, can add a good feel to your game. The Calandian language isn't quite up to the creations of Messrs Tolkien and Barker, but is tolerably good. It does feel like one language, rather than a cobbled-together collection of word-elements. A simple grammar is given along with the brief dictionary. There are also a couple of pages on Calandian Script, an unappealing, though functional, set of squiggles. All I can say is *Rohnu savari Gurkperi*.

The Calandia series provides a traditional D&D-style background with pleasant presentation. Unfortunately there's absolutely nothing special about it.

Paul Mason



The latest and most fashionable genre in rolegaming given the full treatment in the first of our thematic rolegame sections. To get us started, Paul Mason takes a general look at the possibilities.

Definition: 'Cyberpunk. noun: a genre of science fiction which envisages a bleak violent future society in which the world is controlled by a computer network' – *The Longman Register of New Words*.

Forget the definition. Cyberpunk is about two things: technological progress so rapid that the human mind cannot keep up with it, and technological progress so rapid that the distinction between man and machine is blurred out of existence.

A cyberpunk rolegame is about many things. It's about a future we hope will never happen. It's about a dangerous world in which you have to carry heavy weaponry to survive. And it's about cyberspace: the logical extension of current computer interfaces. Rather than interacting with a computer system, man becomes a part of it.

STEAM AND STILETTOS

If you want to run a cyberpunk game successfully, you'll have to pay attention to the atmosphere. In *Neochrome*, James Wallis describes how to establish an authentic cyberpunk feel in your game. You'll still need to be aware of the cyberpunk sources, but if you aren't then you probably wouldn't be running a game in the first place. *BladeRunner*, *Brazil*, *Max*

Headroom – these three give a good visual background. *Neuromancer* by William Gibson is, of course, the cyberpunk bible. Other sources will enable you to go beyond the clichéd. *334* by Thomas M Disch and *Stand on Zanzibar* by John Brunner both contain ideas which pre-figure the popular explosion of cyberpunk. Philip K Dick's books explore the question of 'What is human?' and coincidentally contain plenty of good paranoid plot material.

So what makes cyberpunk different from traditional SF rolegaming? First, I'd say, is claustrophobia. Cyberpunk is not about piloting gleaming spacecraft through the wide open spaces. It's usually planet-bound, and the planet in question is usually Earth.

Second, cyberpunk has a cynical edge. It isn't about good guys and bad guys. In this dark future, everyone is a bad guy, it's just that some are badder than others. Heroism means so much more when the whole world is corrupt, but even heroism is ambiguous. Have you really saved the world from a plot to flood the markets with an artificial addictive strain of wheat? Or have you condemned millions of people to starvation?

Third, cyberpunk is about style. In some ways it's an adolescent fantasy world where everyone is either beautiful or ugly; a world of big guns and chrome plated bionic limbs; a world where the guy who takes off his mirror shades might well be wearing mirrored contact lenses beneath them.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

So there are plenty of ideas knocking around to help you run a cyberpunk game, but you'll probably want a set of rules to run it with. There are two options: you modify a set of rules you're familiar with, or you buy a game specifically designed

for the purpose. *Cyberpunk* is the game which clearly and explicitly deals with this genre (see the review). *Earth/Cybertech*, also reviewed here, turns *2300* into a cyberpunk game, though the possibilities of space travel and disappearing offworld to battle the dastardly Kafers blunt the edge a little. There are other options. *GURPS* is supposed to be able to handle anyworld anywhere (my own opinion is that it is certainly flexible: it can handle all backgrounds in a style which is consistently mediocre) so it is not surprising that it has been adapted for cyberpunk. What is amazing is that the adaptation was an article in Steve Jackson Games's excellent *Roleplayer* news sheet. As the products reviewed here demonstrate, cyberpunk can easily provide material for a complete game and sourcebook. It says a lot for the *GURPS* approach that the cyberpunk article managed to say pretty well all that need be said in three closely packed pages. This made a good point: the hardware which is so essential to cyberpunk is superficial, and even easier to make up for a game than those magical items and tricks and traps that people used to fill *D&D* magazines with. What you need to run a cyberpunk game can't be provided in a product.

Going off at an oblique tangent we have *Dark Future* which, as I'm sure you are all aware, isn't a role-playing game at all. It's a '3-D Roleplay' game, which is a category that might as well include tiddlywinks. Of course, the original *Dark Future*, commissioned by Games Workshop from two of the most talented designers in the country several years ago was a rolegame, and also happened to be a quintessential cyberpunk game with many similarities to the R Talsorian effort. Mechanically it was more sophisticated, but as it may well never see the light of day this is rather academic. Some of the background from that game did sneak into *Dark Future* (Marc Gascogne couldn't waste all his work) and

so in a limited sense this game of battling cars could be considered part of the cyberpunk genre. If anyone manages to generate the appropriate atmosphere I'd love to see it, though; I've always found the game an inferior blend of *Car Wars* and *Thunder Road*.

BRIGHT FUTURE

There is something more on its way. In August, FASA will be shipping a game called *ShadowRun*. Although clearly a

cyberpunk game, this is immediately worthy of extra attention because it has added something to the background:

It is the dark future. Technology is rife. The streets are mean. The corporations are king.

Magic has returned. Trolls and goblins have cast aside their disguises and are now living openly.

Well, what do you think? Is it a novel twist to the cyberpunk idea, or merely an

excuse to cash in on the possibilities of blending the trendy (cyberpunk) with the popular (fantasy). I must admit, I'm intrigued, and I'll certainly give it the benefit of the doubt until I lay my hands on a copy.

Until *ShadowRun* comes out, budding cyberjocks will have to be satisfied with what's currently available, or even better – make it up themselves. Isn't it time we saw a little more creativity from players and refs rather than sitting back and leaving it to the 'professionals'?

CYBERPUNK

DESIGNED BY
MIKE PONDSMITH

PUBLISHED BY
R TALSORIAN GAMES

PRICE: £8.95

First on the streets with a cyberpunk game were R Talsorian, previously known for *Teenagers From Outer Space* and *MEKTON*. It's billed as 'The Roleplaying Game of the Dark Future' (a cheeky nod towards Games Workshop perhaps?), and is quite a literal simulation of the genre, without any gimmicks or innovations.

For your money you get a box with three rule books, a reference sheet and a couple of dice. There isn't much colour (just a splash of red on the box) but this suits the mood of game fairly well.

The books are adequately laid out, with clean art and some simple, but effective, maps and logos. The game is written in a clear, enthusiastic style, but is full of typos – the sign of a rushed production. Its organisation isn't terribly clear. It's by no means obvious where to find what you're looking for, and there's no index. Luckily you can acquaint yourself with the rules fairly quickly.

The first of the three books is *View from the Edge: The Cyberpunk Handbook*. This contains the rule system employed in the game. It's a simple system along the lines of most modern games. You roll a die, add your skill, add the attribute that the skill depends on and attempt to exceed a task difficulty number. Mercifully, there isn't an enormous list of skills for the trainspotter types among us to memorise and bring the game down with quibbles.

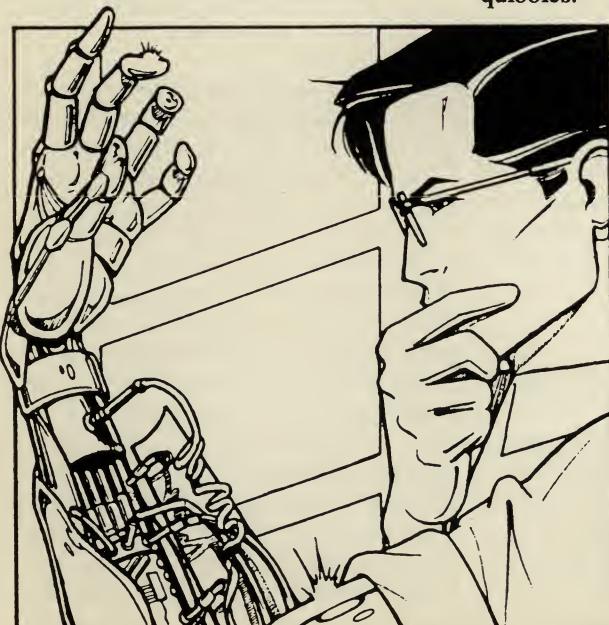
Acquiring skills during the game is handled with a simple system of gaining improvement points: in other words experience points specific to that skill. Initial acquisition is more interesting. You run your character through a series of *Lifepath* charts to determine the course of their early life. It's a little like character generation in *Traveller*, but extended into all areas of life. For example, it includes random events such as making enemies, losing friends, and romantic involvements. The problem with

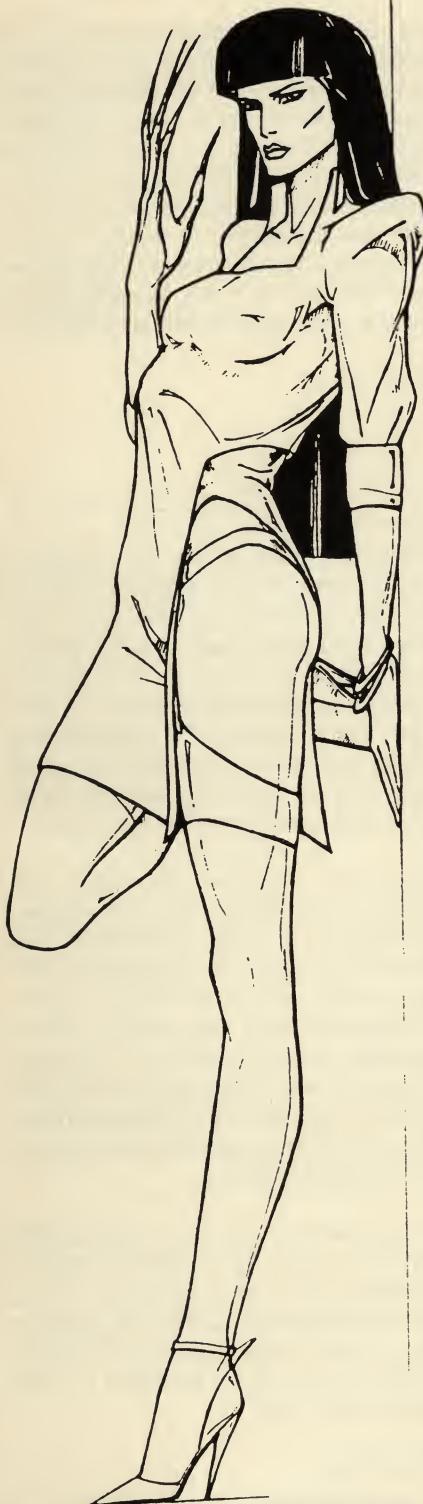
this sort of system is that if run by a rigid referee it constricts players unnecessarily. But anyone with an ounce of intelligence will use the tables to generate ideas, and discuss their own preferences with the referee.

Cyberpunk players may choose to make their characters Rockerboys/girls, Solos, Netrunners, Techies, Medias, Cops, Corporates, Fixers and Nomads. These aren't particularly restrictive character classes, they simply determine which special ability the character starts with. Once you've rolled your stats, plotted your *Lifepath* and acquired your skills, you can start bolting bits of gleaming chrome onto your 'meat' (that's cyberpunk for your organic body). Predictably, all this stuff just adds a couple of points on to the appropriate skills. Similarly, 'wetware' (computer software plugged directly into the brain) just gives you knowledge, or perhaps an enhanced nervous system and faster reflexes.

Non-cybernetic hardware is not dealt with in any detail, and players will have to delve into the second book to uncover details of the big guns they will no doubt be craving.

The rest of the *Handbook* covers the Net, perhaps the most interesting element in cyberpunk. By means of an interface program running on a cyberdeck, a Netrunner can interact directly with a computer system. If you've read *Neuromancer*, or if you can remember the film *TRON* you'll be aware of some of the possibilities. In *Cyberpunk*, Netrunners each use their own interface program to 'turn computer data into perceptual events.' The interface may be an off-the-shelf model, or it can be tailored to the individual's preference. There are three standard types given: the 'Tronnic, which is that used in *Neuromancer* and *TRON*. The Dungeon interprets the system as an underground labyrinth peopled by as





sorted creatures (programs) and treasure (data). The Mega City is nothing to do with our old friend Judge Dredd, but a grimy 1930s San Francisco.

The idea of each Netrunner conceptualising the same computer system and programs in a completely different way is quite appealing. Netrunners cannot share the same interface (because it interacts directly with the nervous system) so two player character Netrunners can have the same event described in completely different terms.

The combat system is contained in the second book, *Friday Night Firefight*. This is a general system used with the *Interlock* series of games produced by R Talsorian, and designed to simulate contemporary small arms battles. It bills itself as a realistic, non glamorous game in which bullets kill. It was apparently researched from police statistics and the like, and is based on the principle that most gun battles are at close range, involve many missed shots, and are usually decided by the first shot to hit. I can't say it showed too much. *Friday Night Firefight* is just an elaboration of the basic task system described above. It has a phase system of action – you know the sort of thing – Rodney acts on phases one and three, Cynthia on two and three, and so on. You roll a task attempt to hit, and then your opponent rolls a task attempt to get out of the way. Once you've hit, you roll the damage (found from a table by cross-referencing the type of round and the range) and subtract armour. Then you get the silly bit. Another table converts the points of damage into a type of wound. Aha! It's one of those marvellous systems without hit points! But the point of systems without hit points is to get a more descriptive feel into combat. And you can't do that when you're surrounded by pages of tables, and have to check a ballistics table to work out how many damage dice to roll.

Flinging *Friday Night Firefight* hastily aside, I come to *Welcome to Night City: A Sourcebook for 2013*. This is where we look to see what Mike Pondsmith has done with the cyberpunk legacy. It opens with a timeline for the next century. This has all the predictable elements – social breakdown, mostly – but is leavened with a pleasing sense of humour. In the world of *Cyberpunk*, the Nuclear arsenals of the USA and USSR are outdated rubbish compared with the Massdrivers of the Euro-African al-

liance. After all, a huge lump of rock is much cheaper than a complex piece of atomic engineering.

The hints on how to run a game lay considerable stress on the 'stylish' approach. You may think that James's suggestions in *Neochrome* are pretty far out, but they're logical extensions of the *Cyberpunk* approach. Unfortunately, concessions have to be made to this being a game played by a number of people. For this reason it is suggested that player characters be part of a team. None of these limit the player character options especially.

Night City is a sample plan complete with shady bars, more shady bars, and a few mega corporation offices. It's a skeletal guide to give you somewhere to work if you need it. It leads in to *Never Fade Away*, a 'scenario'. Well, actually it's a story, with statistics given in the margins in case you want to run it as a game. A risky option really, as the prose certainly doesn't scale new heights. It's an adequate yarn of violent revenge, dwelling on the great American mythic archetypes of

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Reviewed in *Games International* #3, *Dragon* #140, *Aslan* #7.

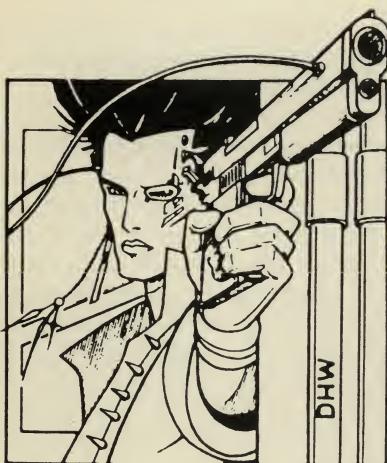
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EARTH/ CYBERTECH SOURCEBOOK (2300 SUPPLEMENT)

DESIGNED BY
LESTER W SMITH

PUBLISHED BY
GDW

PRICE £4.49

It's the 24th century. Man has conquered the stars. Yet the technology presented in *Earth/CyberTech* is not much more advanced than that of the *Cyberpunk* game. Presumably this can be justified by the world collapse following the Twilight (2000) War. It would be horrible to think that we'd returned to the technological naïveté of original *Traveller* computers (far larger and less sophisticated than contemporary computers).

Earth/CyberTech is a single 96-page book with an excellent, *Blade Runner*-inspired cover. Inside it is clearly and effectively laid out with notes and statistics placed in margins where they don't interfere with reading the material. The art could be a little better in places, however.

The book opens with details about the Orbital Quarantine Command (OQC), by

the present and near future: big guns and rock (pronounced 'rawk') music. If you like your scenarios heavily plotted then you'll find this an excellent way of getting into the game.

The sourcebook rounds off with a list of cyberpunk sources (including the excellent, but obscure movie *Liquid Sky* — testimony to the author's genuine enthusiasm for his vision of the genre) and then provides some useful source material in the form of newspaper clippings, internal memoranda and the like, to give you a feel for life in 2013. It isn't a pleasant place, believe me.

All in all, *Cyberpunk* does the job. If you want to run a game in this genre and you want a single source of rules and background, then this game will be adequate to the task. It might be of some interest to referees of more conventional science fiction games, interested in using the bionics and netrunning. It doesn't contain any ideas radically new to rolegaming, however, and so won't be much use to anyone else except inveterate collectors.

Paul Mason

which the Earth governments cooperate to prevent anything nasty getting on to the home planet. The OQC headquarters are in the port of Gateway, an orbiting station connected to earth by a 'beanstalk'. This orbital tower is given limited description in half a dozen pages. Floor plans are provided for referees who wish to run adventures in the Gateway, and on the way up the beanstalk, but since the station is effectively a city in space there's only so much that can be provided. One mistake is that, unlike all the other major cities on Earth, no demographic data is provided on the city. Another is that the anchor point on earth is Libreville, described as being in Zaire. Since Libreville is in Gabon (and is correctly placed in Gabon in the map which appears later in the book) this undermines the authority of the background detail. And since most of the book is background detail on the various nations of Earth, that's not a good sign.

The nation descriptions follow on from the plans of Gateway. They demonstrate thorough research, but aren't the most riveting reading. Furthermore, they don't enhance the usefulness of the book as a tool to run a cyberpunk game. This criticism isn't entirely fair — *Earth/CyberTech* is aimed primarily at players of *2300* — but it does mean that you shouldn't be deceived by the cover. *Cyberpunk: An Introduction* follows on from the nation descriptions, but features nothing like the same detail. Four stereotypes of cyberpunk are listed: the corporate, the bionic warrior (what *Cyberpunk* calls a Solo), the rock-and-roll rebel and the techie. Two paragraphs of hints on running the game are pertinent (stressing *sensory overload*) but short.

The section on bionics is quite sophisticated, and points out disadvantages to

prosthetics often missed: for example, if you enhance your strength you will be very clumsy until you get used to it. On the other hand the section on cyberspace is quite superficial. *Cyberpunk* has had far more imagination lavished on its treatment of the Net than *Earth/CyberTech*, which only reproduces the ideas popularised in Gibson's *Neuromancer*, with a small number of programs described.

The book is wrapped up with a role-playing competition. This is guaranteed to wind me up, as the notion of deciding a winner based on role-playing is as fatuous as the Eurovision Song Contest. Having said that, the scenario has an amusing opening sequence. The player characters are travelling on a bus which runs over a man. The unfortunate fellow proves to have an atomic bomb wired into his abdominal cavity...

This product is excellent value for *2300* referees who wish to inject a dose of cyberpunk into their campaign. If you don't already play *2300*, you probably won't find it too useful, and it's by no means an essential addition to your cyberpunk library.

Paul Mason



NEOCHROME

James Wallis chromes up his chipware and spits out some datastream mindmods

The essence of cyberpunk is atmosphere. It is an atmosphere that oozes like battery acid from the pages of the books of William Gibson, Rudy Rucker and Bruce Sterling, and once it is sampled it hitches on and hides in your brain like some hideous black-ice virus. It may seem that cyberpunk is a ripe target for gamers, but the truth is that gaming is a target for cyberpunks.

For those who are still not sure what the violent world of data jacks, multinational power-bases, extrasensory computer networks, black ice, mirrorshades and high-tech low life has in store, or would like to try their hand at running a cyberpunk type game but are afraid that they couldn't capture the right atmosphere, here are a few handy hints.

PREPARATION

Go and buy a big book on a computer system that you know nothing about. Learn the glossary off by heart, and practice making up phrases that sound as though you know what you're talking about. Thus: 'There's a system partition barring that interface, and the board it's on uses a different bus mode. No way you can get at those files without accessing another module with a different processor', rather than 'Sorry, you can't do that.' Even better: 'It's thrown up a Lock Violation 23 error message.' Snarl at yourself in the mirror for an hour before the players arrive.

Caution: running cyberpunk games for players who *do* know something about

computers is a hazardous undertaking. Avoid doing so where possible.

SETTING

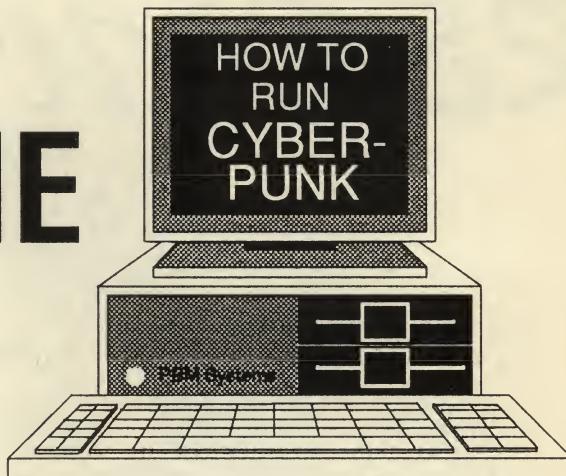
Draw the curtains. Switch off the main lights, and use a few spots with low-wattage coloured bulbs to cast patches of light on the walls. Make sure that the only area of decent illumination is over the place where you're sitting.

Throw old wrappings from fast food joints (preferably ozone-hostile styrofoam ones) all over the floor, to a depth of about three inches. Add in a few wires, leads and cables (especially ribbon cables), preferably connected to something and/or ending in bare wire.

Switch on the TV, and turn the sound right down. If you have more than one TV, turn them all on, tuned to different stations. If you have a computer, leave it running some sort of non-repetitive graphics demonstration.

Put some carefully selected music on the stereo. Anything with a repetitive beat, using sampling and incoherent lyrics that sound as if the vocalist is having their appendix removed without anaesthetic will do. Failing that, try anything that uses a lot of power chords, or a slick technobeat. Suggested groups: Skinny Puppy, Ministry, The Residents, Kraftwerk, Yellow Magic Orchestra, Tubeway Army, Hawkwind (1982 and after), Nash the Slash, film soundtracks by Tangerine Dream. Then turn up the volume. This is not background music; this is part of the game.

Leave a pair of mirrorshades in the middle of the table. Do not wear them unless you're going to keep them on for the whole gaming session. Encourage the players to bring in their own pairs, and to wear them.



PLAYING

Cyberpunk is a hostile future, in which the individual has been pushed, filed, indexed and numbered as far as is humanly possible. Those with the wits to survive, survive only on their wits. As referee, you must not volunteer information unless it is obvious to the players. Discourage timewasting. Make it perfectly clear that bloody and unpleasant death waits just a footstep behind. When playing a non-player character, remember that almost everyone uses a terse slang, far too many full-stops and is generally off-hand if not downright insulting. Trust nobody. *Paranoia* veterans will be right at home here.

DO NOT STOP THE GAME FOR A BREAK. Tension and suspension of disbelief must be maintained throughout, or your plot is lost. Players can vacate themselves, but don't suddenly stand up, stretch, turn the lights back on and say 'Let's get some pizza'.

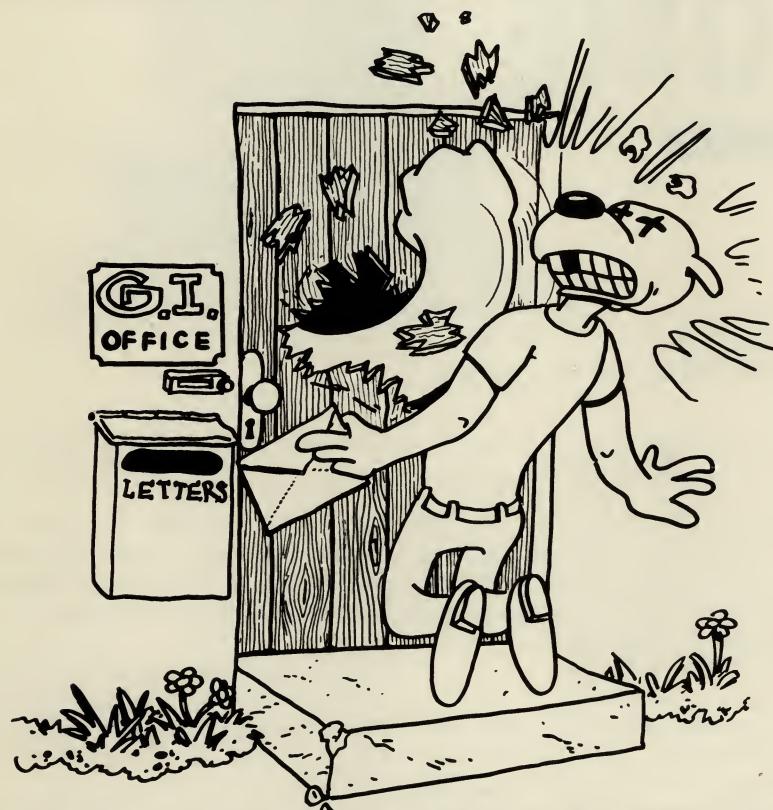
If you can find some, use chrome-plated dice. This simple move can have devastating effects towards creating the right atmosphere.

Discourage silly play by frying the character's brain the next time he or she tries to jack into the network.

If you can carry all this off, if only for one session, then you and your group will have experienced cyberpunk as she is written. Believe me, it's worth it. From that point, who knows how far you may go.

Excuse me a moment, but my implant interface seems to be stuck . . .

REBOUND



Write to: Games International, Lamerton House, 23a High Street, Ealing, London W5 5DF

Give a man enough rope . . .

This rebuttal is in response to Alan R Moon's in depth critique of the **Mr Trucker** board game in issue #3 of the relatively unknown *Games International* trade journal.

Obviously, Mr Moon does not possess the unique talents and skills which make for a top rate marketing person. As a matter of fact, Mr Moon has clearly demonstrated in his review of **Mr Trucker** board game that he has absolutely no understanding about the marketing concept. The writer spent four years in college and three years in university to learn all about the marketing concept and how this works.

Quite simply, **Mr Trucker** board game was not designed to appeal to Mr Moon. This comprehensive and highly educational game about trade between Canada and the United States was created to appeal to 35 000 000 people who are directly and indirectly linked with North America's biggest industry, which is the

transportation of consumer, industrial and agricultural goods.

People like Mr Moon were not included during the research phase of this project.

Mr Moon stated, 'I have no doubts, it is not much of a game.' I prefer to rely on the brilliant marketing and promotional people employed by 14 multi-billion dollar corporations that have enthusiastically endorsed the **Mr Trucker** board game, compared to the inexperienced and sometimes arrogant attitudes of conceited youths who have appointed themselves as being experts in their own right!

One of the many negative things that Mr Moon commented on was that the game box cover was 'much too busy'. Again, that's because Mr Moon doesn't understand what appeals to this particular target market. Megabuck corporations such as Fnord, Volvo GM, Goodyear, Firestone, Esso, Exxon, Bridgestone, National Transportation Week (Canada, USA and Mexico), Navistar, Transportation Clubs International etc, overwhelmingly agreed

to have Marketing International Corporation reproduce their company logos on the game box cover to demonstrate to consumers their support and belief that **Mr Trucker** is a *quality* board game.

In addition to this *Toys & Games* gave **Mr Trucker** a 4½ star rating which is the highest rating ever given for a board game by this *highly respected* Canadian trade journal. In comparison, **Trivial Pursuit** received a three star rating from *Toys & Games* trade journal and we all know about the tremendous success of this Canadian board game.

The fact that over 10 000 (typed and hand written) letters, together with telephone enquiries have been received at Marketing International Corporation over the past year from people asking where they can purchase this game, also demonstrates that the creator of **Mr Trucker** did his homework in terms of researching what appeals to this target market.

If Mr Moon is planning his career to become known as an objective board game critic, I would strongly suggest that he continue his education in business administration and marketing – and he should get a few more years under his belt before you the reader can feel confident about Mr Moon's ability to perform his job effectively!

Garry F White

Marketing International Corporation
St Thomas, Ontario, Canada.



Alan Moon: an 'arrogant and conceited youth.'

Get your teeth into this

The Flying Turtle share-trading game *Shark* is a splendidly clever and original business game, but the rules provided are a mess: the rules for determining price changes are inconsistent and incomplete, and several situations which arise in play are not covered at all. I would therefore like to suggest the following corrections and additions:

1 A group consists of an isolated counter or of two or more orthogonally connected counters of the same colour.

2 The value of an assembly of G groups containing a total of C counters is $C - (G - 1)$, subject to the proviso that in a single group of more than seven counters any counters above seven are ignored.

3 The price of a share is at all times equal to the value of all the counters of that colour on the grid. Hence, when a share price

rises or falls, the price change is simply the difference between the old price and the new price. *Exception:* if the value of a colour rises above 15, the price rises only to 15.

4 When a larger group eliminates a smaller group, all bonuses and dividends in respect of the larger group are paid out before the smaller group is removed and debts are paid.

5 An isolated counter can be eliminated like any other group.

6 When a share price drops to zero, then, after debts are paid as usual, all shares of that colour must be returned to the bank without payment.

7 When a counter is placed which ends the game, all financial transactions resulting from that placement are completed as usual before the game ends.

8 Shares held must be publicly displayed at all times.

These rules have been playtested; they cover all the situations which can arise in play, and they give a satisfying game which, as far as I can judge, reflects the intentions of the designer.

Anyone who sends me an SAE will receive a completely rewritten set of rules for the game.

Larry Trask
8 Valley Close
Brighton BN 1 5FB

Thanks for the clarifications. However, we feel your third point is incorrect: isolated counters do not affect the share price, therefore to state that the 'price of a share is at all times equal to the value of all the counters of that colour on the grid' is wrong.

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GLC (R.I.P.) Wargames Club meets alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays (May 3, 11, 17, 25, 31) in room 88, County Hall, on the South Bank, SE1 (nearest tubes Embankment and Waterloo). 6.30 till 10.00pm. Miniatures, two player board wargames, Warhammer 40k, Pax Britannica, 1830, etc.

NEW MALDEN & SURBITON games group meets every other Monday at the Railway Hotel

Pub, Coombe Road, New Malden, 7pm till closing time. Miniature figure wargames include Vietnam, Warhammer 40K and others. Board gamers and role-players welcome. Contact Peter 01-942 5624.

NOTTINGHAM AND DERBY Games Club meets every Thursday at the Queens Walk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham. 7-10.30pm. Contact Mick Haytack 0332 511898.

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FANTASY WORLD Role Playing Club in Munich. For more info contact Detlov Motz, Vorholzerstr. 4, 8000 Munich 71. ☎ 089 795244.

USA

NORTH SHORE GAMES CLUB meets approximately once a month somewhere in Massachusetts. Tournaments, food, and even a newsletter. For more details of this, and other East Coast games clubs, contact Alan Moon, 11 Broadway, Apt 1, Beverly, MA 01918. ☎ 508 922 7488.

EAST VALLEY Advanced Squad Leader Club. Contact Pierce Ostrander, 5046 E Decatur St, Mesa, AZ 85205. ☎ 602 985 4505.

WINDY CITY WARGAMERS meet twice a month. Miniatures and board wargames, plus newsletter. Louis Tokarz, 5724 W 106th St, Chicago Ridge, IL 60415. ☎ 312 857 7060.

NEW ORLEANS GAMES CLUB seeks players for all kinds of games. Contact Greg Schloesser, 3800 Briant Drive, Marrero, LA 70072. ☎ 504 347 7145.

HEXAGON SOCIETY meets every first and third Saturday From 10am to 6pm. Contact James McCormack, 1450 Harmon Ave, 224c Las Vegas, NV 89119. ☎ 702 794 3523 (evenings)

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SCHENECTADY WARGAMERS ASSOCIATION have regular meetings and hold weekend conventions featuring tournaments based on Axis & Allies, Empire Builder, and Machiavelli. Role-playing too. Contact: Eric Paperman, 418 Vliet Blvd. Cohoes, NY 12047. ☎ 518 237 5874.

SANTA FE SPRINGS GAMERS ASSOC. looking for new members to play boardgames and Role-Playing games. Tues/Thurs 5-9pm. Saturdays 9am-5pm. at the Town Centre Hall, 11740 E Telegraph Rd, Santa Fe Springs, CA. ☎ 213 863 4896 (club hours only).

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CAMPAIGN '89, May 6-7, 1989 at Woughton Leisure Centre, Milton Keynes. Wargames convention with demonstration and participation games plus trade stands. Contact Dean Bass, 14 Skeats Wharf, Pennyland, Milton Keynes MK15 8AY.

GAMES DAY, May 27, 1989 at the Assembly Rooms, Derby. Redesigned Games Workshop event. Includes the Golden Demon Awards and other Games Workshop related events. £2.50 on the door or £2 in advance.

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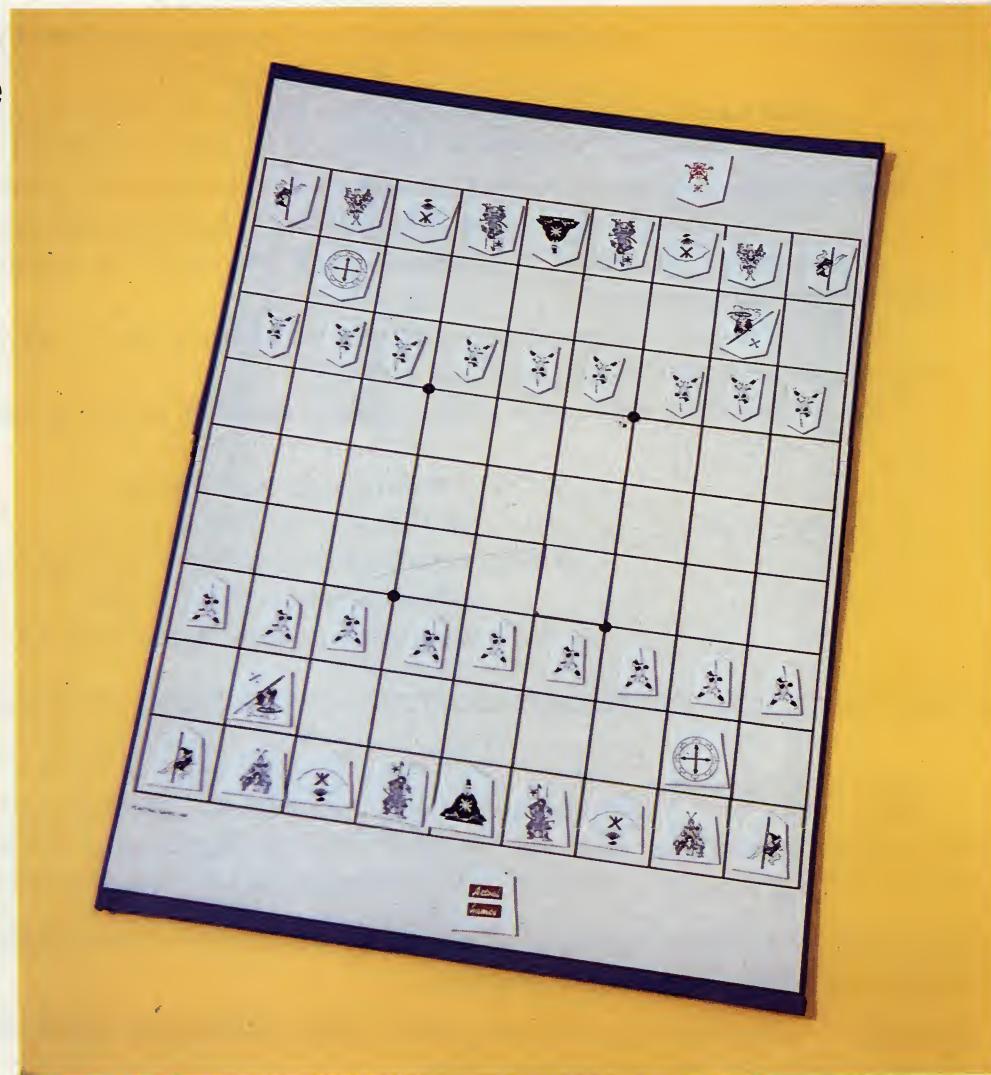
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